JANE LENDS A HAND

SHIRLEY WATKINS

Jane Lends A Hand

BY

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Jane Lends a Hand

CHAPTER I

AFFAIRS OF THE LAMBERT FAMILY

AT SIX o'clock Jane had awakened, and, lifting her tousled head from her pillow, sniffed the frosty air.

The red sunlight of an October morning was sending its first ruddy beams into the bare little room, but notwithstanding this sign that the morning was advancing, and the fact that all the children had had their first summons to get up and dress, Jane, this lazy Jane, merely burrowed down deeper into her warm nest, and buried her round nose in the patchwork quilt.

She had a strong disinclination to leaving her cosy bed, and braving the penetrating chill of an autumn morning. Owing to Mr. Lambert's Spartan ideas on the up-bringing of children, the little bed-rooms under the irregular roof of the old house were never heated until the bitterest days of mid-winter. *His* children were not, said he, to be softened and rendered unfit to endure the various hardships of life by pampering. His wife, the

jolly comfort-loving Gertrude, sometimes confided privately to Grandmother Winkler that she thought it was too hard on the children to have to leave their warm beds, and dress in rooms where the ice formed a film in the water pitchers, and in which they could see their breath; but when anyone in the Lambert household had ideas contrary to those of the master, they did not advertise them publicly.

Among Mr. Lambert's pet aversions were Unpunctuality and Laziness, and no one had better reason to know this than Jane. Nevertheless, she infringed upon the iron-bound rules of the household every day of her life, and cheerfully paid her penalties with a sort of serene stoicism. She had inherited from her placid, happy-tempered mother a vigorous dislike of physical discomfort, and a calm way of doing what she wanted, and then good-naturedly paying the piper as circumstances demanded.

In the adjoining room, the twins, Wilhelmine (or Minie) and Lottie could be heard chattering and laughing in their fresh, sweet voices. Shivering, but rosy and wide-awake, the two little girls were dressed in their warm woolen frocks inside of ten minutes. Since they were six years old, Mr. Lambert had permitted no one to help them but themselves; and so, with their little cold red fingers they buttoned each other's dress and plaited each other's smooth, shining yellow hair; then set to work making up their wooden beds, sweeping, dusting, and putting their room to rights.

At half-past six came the summons to breakfast, which had already been announced by appetizing odors of porridge and frying bacon.

Little Minie, running past her sister's door, glanced in, and stood transfixed with horror at the sight of Jane rolled up like a dormouse, and sti' dozing peacefully.

"Oh, *Ja-ane!*"

A head covered with curly, reddish hair rose above the mountain of bed-clothes; a pair of sleepy eyes blinked at the little girl.

"Um." A yawn. "What time is it?"

"It's *half-past thix,* and breakfath's all ready, and you'll be late *again,* Jane. Whatever will Papa thay! This was Lottie, who never failed to join her twin on any occasion of grave importance. The two plump, rosy-cheeked little girls, with their stiffly starched white pinafores, and with their yellow pig-tails sticking out at the sides of their heads, were as much alike as a pair of Dresden ornaments. They stood now, hand-in-hand, their china-blue eyes round with reproof and dismay, gazing at lazy Jane.

"I've got a—a headache," announced Jane unblushingly, "I don't think I'll go to school to-day."

"O-oh, Jane!" remonstrated the twins in chorus.

"Well, I haven't exactly got one *now,*" said Jane, "but I would have if I got up too suddenly. I've been studying too hard. That's what."

"Ooooh, Jane!" The twins covered their rosy mouths with their hands, and tittered.

"You don't know anything about it," said Jane, tartly. She reflected for a moment. On second thought the plea of a headache seemed weak; furthermore, if it were accepted the chances that Mr. Lambert would recommend a bitter dose and a dull day in the house had to be considered; for the stern parent had a certain grim humour of his own, and was not easily to be imposed on even by Jane's fertile invention.

"Well, then put down the windows, Minie—like a good little darling, and I'll be down-stairs in three minutes. The day after to-morrow's Saturday anyhow." And encouraged by this cheerful thought, Jane at length prepared to rise.

Her idea of "three minutes" was astonishingly inaccurate. She dawdled into her clothes, interrupted by fits of abstraction, during which, with one foot on the chair, and the button-hook thrust through the button-holes of her sturdy shoes, she stared out of the uncurtained window.

The old house, a rambling two storey building, half-wood, half-brick, abounding in gables and dormer windows which gave it its quaintly picturesque outline, fronted on the busiest street of the industrious but placid little town.

For more than a hundred years the Winkler family had held there a certain calm, unassailable position; rightly theirs as the unfailing reward of industry, honesty, and the other simple, respectable virtues of conscientious, self-respecting citizens and tradesfolk.

One hundred and thirty years ago, to be exact, old Johann Winkler had settled there, and had founded what deserves the name of an Institution. Certainly, it was the most wonderful bakeshop in the world.

Now, no one but a true Winkler had ever been intrusted with the precious recipes for those spiced fruit cookies, or those rich snow-cakes, those golden breakfast-rolls, or those plum-puddings which have immortalized the name. And in view of the importance which such a family must have in the eyes of all who respect supremely excellent baking, a short history of its affairs may be admitted here.

It is hardly necessary to say that it prospered, for no Winkler had ever been born lacking the virtue of wise thriftiness, or the ability to make small savings bring in generous increase. At the same time, the shop was never moved from the spot where it had first been opened, nor was any attempt ever made to give it a more pretentious appearance.

The corner stone which old Johann Winkler had laid himself with so much pride bore the date, "A.D. 1789."

A good many generations of little Winklers had grown up in the shelter of the quaint old house; and a good many generations of little townspeople had stuffed their round stomachs with those incomparable spice-cakes and ginger-nuts, had loitered hungrily around the tempting show-window,

and had scrawled caricatures on the walls and the worn stone steps.

The business had been inherited in a direct line from father to son; until the day when Uncle Franz Winkler had gone to sea, and left his domestic patrimony in the hands of his sister.

This sister was no other than the jolly Gertrude, once the prettiest, most blooming maiden in Frederickstown; who, in the course of time married one Peter Carl Lambert, a grave, practical-minded young man; and this grave, practical-minded young man (who, as the years went on became more and more grave, not to say, severe, and more and more practical) was no other than the father of all the young Lamberts, a portion of whose history is going to be the subject of this story.

Mr. Lambert was, himself, the owner of a moderately prosperous business, dealing in the wholesale and retail distribution of hay and grain; but at the some time he had no inclination to allow his wife's inheritance to decline, and while he managed his own affairs, Gertrude and Grandmother Winkler continued in charge of the bakery, which under his shrewd supervision became more flourishing than ever.

On one point and only one did husband and wife find cause for dissension. It had become a tradition in the family, as has already been said, that no one but a Winkler had ever possessed the magical recipes for those cakes and pies which had no

rivals. Now, since the outrageous and even impious conduct of Uncle Franz, the question had risen, who should be regarded as the heir to the business and the name? For there were no more Winklers. Gertrude wanted her only son, Carl, to be her heir, although he was a Lambert. But Mr. Lambert had other ideas for the youth, and the hope that his son would, by becoming a professional man, take a step up in the world, was dear to his heart. Furthermore, Carl himself, a calm, phlegmatic and determined boy, shared his father's views. He had announced his intention of becoming a lawyer.

So matters stood. There seemed to be no solution to the problem. But these family difficulties had no place in Jane's mind as she took her time to wash and dress on that October morning. What engrossed *her* thoughts was the concocting of a feasible plan to avoid the distasteful prospect of going to school.

The sun had fully risen now, and already the frosty air had been softened by its genial warmth. She opened her window again, and leaned out, looking critically from east to west with the gaze of an old seaman, calculating the possibilities of the weather.

There was not a cloud in the sky. Never befor, it seemed to her, had the heavens displayed such a vast expanse of deep, untroubled blue. A light, fresh wind rustled through the hazel-nut tree whose boughs touched her window; and sent a

few of the ruddy, copper-colored leaves drifting lazily down to the uneven brick pavement below.

Across the square, she could see the broad, open door of Mr. Lambert's warehouse, where already two men in blue shirts were at work tossing a fresh wagon-load of corn husks into the well-filled loft. Early to bed and early to rise was the motto of the industrious folk of Frederickstown, one and all. Wagons covered with white canvas hoods, and filled with tobacco, others, overflowing with pumpkins, celery, apples and cranberries—all the rich autumn produce of the fertile farming country beyond the town—were rumbling over the cobblestones in a picturesque procession, on their way to the market-place. And the well-known smell of the rimy vegetables was to the adventuresome Jane an almost irresistible call to the open.

Her meditations were soon cut short by a final summons—and this in the firm cold tones of Mr. Lambert himself—to breakfast.

"Jane! Coming? Or must I fetch you?"

"Jiminy!" said Jane, and banging down the window she fled, clattering down the old wooden staircase like a whirlwind.

In the large, sunny room, which served nearly all purposes, the family had gathered for breakfast; Granny Winkler at one end of the table—a miniature old lady with a frilled cap,—Mr. Lambert at the other end, Carl at his right and flaxen haired Elise at his left, Mrs. Lambert with one twin beside her and another facing her. Jane's

chair, between Elise and Lottie was still conspicuously empty.

A door at the right of the dining room opened into the bakeshop, and a second door at the back led to the kitchen, from which the exquisite odors of the day's outlay of fresh cakes and bread were already issuing. The big, bright room, with its casement windows opening onto the small garden hemmed in by high brick walls, with its pots of geraniums, and Chinese lilies,—which were Elise's special care—its immaculately dusted cupboards on whose shelves gleamed rows of solid old German pewter ware, was the scene in which the Lambert's, great and small, carried on a large part of their daily affairs. In one corner stood Mr. Lambert's squat, business like desk, where every evening, from nine to ten, he went over his accounts. At the round table in the center, the family ate their meals, and at night, the children prepared their lessons, while Grandmother Winkler, seated in her padded rocking chair, read her Bible, or nodded over her knitting.

When Jane made her unceremonious entry, the family was seated, and, with their heads bent reverently over their plates of steaming porridge, were reciting grace in unison.

Mrs. Lambert, glancing up, made her a sign to take her place as inconspicuously as possible; and accordingly just before Mr. Lambert raised his head, she slipped into her chair.

Her father eyed her for a moment with uncer-

tainty and displeasure; but this morning he had another matter on his mind of greater importance than that of reprimanding incorrigible Jane. Moreover, he had made it a rule, always, if possible, to avoid unpleasantness at meals, owing to the unfavorable effects upon the digestion. Consequently, after a brief, cold stare at his daughter, whose shining morning face was as bland as if her conscience were completely innocent of guilt, he said, solemnly,

"Good morning, Jane."

And Jane said, beaming at him, "Good morning, Papa," and rose to kiss his cheek, and then to give her mother a hug that left the plump, smiling, dimpling Gertrude quite breathless.

"Sit down now, you bad child," whispered Mrs. Lambert, patting Jane's ruddy cheek, "and don't talk. Your father is going to."

The family sat silent and expectant, while Mr. Lambert gravely salted his porridge, then fumbled for his steel-rimmed spectacles in the pocket of his coat, fitted them on his high-bridged nose, and at length cleared his throat.

By this time Jane, whose curiosity was of the most irrepressible variety, had all but broken her neck by craning and wriggling in her chair to see the letter which lay beside her father's plate. It bore a foreign stamp, and she guessed, and guessed rightly that it had some bearing on Mr. Lambert's gravity of demeanor. Finally, unable to endure her father's pompous preparations for speech any

longer she pointed to the envelope, and inquired timidly,

"Who's that from, Papa?"

"That is none of your affair, Jane," said Carl, with perfect truth, but in his unfortunately superior and reproving way, "and you are very ill-mannered."

He spoke with his characteristically priggish air, with a pomposity ludicrously like his father's, and doubly ludicrous in a lad of barely sixteen.

Carl, who was Mr. Lambert's darling, was at that time a tall, thin, delicate looking boy, with a long pale face, straight brown hair, which was cut in a bang across his forehead, and a pair of near-sighted, light grey eyes, that blinked owlishly behind the thick lenses of his spectacles.

It is true that his character was as nearly faultless as it is possible for any youth's character to be; he was quiet, studious, and dutiful. At school he shone as by far the best of all the pupils, and at home he was never known to disobey a single rule of the household. Intelligent beyond the average, with a precocious love of accuracy; astonishingly, even irritatingly self-controlled, and with a dry judicial quickness and keenness already strongly developed, he was an unusually promising boy, in whom one already saw the successful, complacent, cool-tempered man. But at the same time he neither cared for, nor could boast of great popularity. His mother felt more awe than affection for him; in all of his sisters but Jane, he inspired only

a sort of timid admiration and respect; and his school-companions summed him up tersely as a "muff" and a "grind." For, while he walked away with the highest honors at the close of every session, he was, if the truth must be told, something of a coward. He had moods of sulkiness, and moods of maddening superiority. His brain was nimble enough, but he had never been known to accept any challenge to match his physical strength and courage with theirs. He professed a deep contempt for their primitive and barbaric methods of settling difficulties, and adroitly evaded the outcome of any schoolboy's discussion that seemed likely to end in mortal combat, by yielding his point with a self-contained, contemptuous politeness, and a premature diplomacy which mystified and enraged his companions.

Jane only was not to be dominated by his assumption of patronizing authority; and at his unsolicited correction, she promptly bristled up. It rarely took much to rouse the fiery, impulsive Jane.

"Mind your *own* business!"

"*Jane!*" Mr. Lambert turned to her, his spectacles glistening warningly. There was a moment's silence.

"Do you wish to leave the table?"

"No, Papa, but—"

"Very well, then. Have the goodness to be quiet."

"Yes, Papa. But—"

"Silence, ma'am! Your brother was quite right.

He is older than you, and he had good reason to reprimand you."

Jane meekly subsided; but when her father had withdrawn his gaze, she refreshed herself by making a most hideous grimace at her brother, who, more complacent than ever, retaliated with a look of icy and withering scorn.

By this time, Mr. Lambert had almost finished a second reading of the letter, while his wife scanned his face anxiously, not daring to urge him to share its news with her. It covered three or four pages of cheap paper, and was written in a great, sprawling script that consumed one sheet in six or seven lines.

"It looks as if it were written by a *sailor*," murmured Jane, without lifting her eyes, and seemingly speaking to herself; and in the same dreamy undertone, she explained this singular observation, "Everything about a sailor is sort of loose and blowy; they've got blowy coats, and blowy neckties, and blowy trousers—"

"You've never seen a sailor," said Carl also in a low tone, "so you don't know what you're talking about."

"I *do* know what I'm talking about," returned Jane, "I wrote a story about a sailor once, and I could see him inside of my head just as plainly as anything. He had red hair, and a fuzzy wart on his cheek, like a caterpillar, and his name was Moses Thomson—"

"Well, wife, after all there is no choice left us,"

said Mr. Lambert laying down the letter. "Without a doubt, this will be a burden, a heavy responsibility; but I hope I am not deficient in generosity. I think no one can accuse me of that. I am prepared to do my duty in this matter as in all others."

"But—but what does the letter say, Peter?" asked Mrs. Lambert timidly. "I haven't seen it."

"This letter is from your brother—"

"Yes. From Franz. I recognized his hand after all these years—"

"Your poor brother. Far be it from me to judge him. I have nothing to say about him. A shiftless idler, a hair-brained, irresponsible ne'er-do-well comes to no good end, and leaves better folk to take up his burdens. But it is not for *us* to judge. I have nothing to say about him—"

"Peter! My poor brother—my poor Franz!" cried Mrs. Lambert, greatly agitated, "what are you saying?" She stretched out her hand to take the letter, and, in her concern, half-rose from her chair.

"I will read you his letter, my dear," said Mr. Lambert. "Try to control yourself." He looked at her calmly and firmly, and she sat down again, with tears welling up in her soft, beautiful eyes.

Mr. Lambert cleared his throat, and read:

"Dear brother and Honored Sir; I hope this finds you and my good, dear mother, and my dear sister, Gertrude, and all your dear little ones in good health. I am not in good health. I am thinking that my time is about up although not an old man, just forty-two

which is the Prime of life. The doctor, who is a good fellow, thinks it is about up with me but I have got a lot out of lite and have no complaints to make. But I would ask you a favor, and hope that you will see your way to granting me this, seeing that I am a dying man and have no one to turn to and being in a forran country. My son, Paul, will soon be left alone, I fear, which is a bad thing for a young lad and I am hoping that perhaps being kinsfolk and he being a likely young fellow, good hearted though a bit unlicked, you may find your way to giving him a home until he can shift for himself. I haven't done all I should have done by the lad, perhaps, living a kind of touch and go life, and I am hoping that you may find your way to letting him get some education which I think a valuable thing for a man, though having no great love of letters myself. This is a great favor I am asking I know but I trust you may find it in your heart to do me this favor and the boy will not forget it. The boy will work for you also and do as you say. He is sixteen years old now, and an orphan my wife being dead these ten years or so.

"My dear brother, I beg you to forget me and my failings, which have been many and show your kindness to my poor boy. And now I will close with respectful regards to yourself and give my love to my dear old mother and to my dear sister and all her sweet children who must be big youngsters now.

"Respectfully your brother,

"Franz Winkler.

"P. S. Am not letting on to the boy what the doctor says as he will take it hard and I can't bear that. Have just told him that I am sending him back to America

with a friend, Mr. Morse, and that I will join him as soon as I am in better shape, and have told him how to find you."

A silence followed the reading of this letter, and the emotions that it had roused among the members of the little family, were plainly to be seen in their faces. The twins who had not been able to understand it but who felt that it had brought some grave news, looked first at their father and then at their mother. Carl watched Mr. Lambert, and Elise's plump, rosy face was solemn; but Jane, as if she were pierced by an understanding of the pathos that was magnified by the very clumsy illiterateness of the letter, sat perfectly still; her vivid face contracted with a look of genuine pain.

Mrs. Lambert was weeping. Then, suddenly, old Grandmother Winkler, who had not said a word, got up, took her son's letter out of Mr. Lambert's hand, and leaning on her cane, went out of the room.

The astonishment and awkwardness depicted in Mr. Lambert's face showed that he had not guessed that the letter would produce such an effect.

After a moment or two, he cleared his throat, and said in a gentle but somewhat unctuous tone to his wife:

"My dear, we must not be impatient under our afflictions. This is very sad; but it is the will of heaven, and we should learn to endure our sor-

rows—er—uncomplainingly. Furthermore, Providence has seen fit to soften this blow by—er—that is after all, you have not seen Franz in ten years or more."

"Yes, Peter. Of course," answered Mrs. Lambert, meekly wiping her eyes on her napkin. "But when I think of poor Franz—all alone—and the boy—that poor child—"

"Of course my dear, your brother may have deceived himself. Come, he may be on the road to health at this moment. Let us hope for the best. Let us prepare to welcome our nephew, and perhaps,—who knows, Franz himself may be spared to us."

Mrs. Lambert's face brightened. She was naturally optimistic, and eagerly grasped this ray of hope. Moreover, while she had been very fond of her brother, in years of absence his features had somewhat faded from her memory. She was not fond of sorrow or melancholy, and was ready to exchange grief for hope, and tears for sanguine smiles the moment she saw a possibility of the future setting her fears at nothing.

"Yes, yes. What you say is quite true, Peter. After all Franz may recover completely."

"Certainly," said Mr. Lambert, briskly. "And now my dear, let us consider."

"Is Paul our cousin, Papa?" asked Jane.

Mr. Lambert ignored her question.

"I feel great sympathy for the boy," he said to his wife. "It is hard indeed to lose a father at his

tender age. For after all, to whom can one turn for such disinterested guidance? Who will have his welfare more deeply at heart? I hope my son, that in comparing *your* lot," he turned to Carl, "with that of this unfortunate young man, you will realize your blessings. And I hope, nay, I believe that in me, this orphaned youth will find one who in every way will strive to fill in his life a place worthy of the revered name of 'father.'"

"Then," continued Jane, who had been following up her own train of thought, "then Paul is a Winkler. And so he can go into the business when he is a man."

This simple observation, which had not yet occurred to anyone, called forth looks of surprise.

"That is quite true!" exclaimed Mr. Lambert.

"But of course!" cried his wife.

"I see the beneficent hand of Providence in this," said Mr. Lambert, who was fond of thinking that Heaven had his domestic affairs very much in mind. "Yes, we must prepare to welcome our nephew. I hope, my dear, that he will not prove difficult to manage. I hope that he is not lacking in a grateful heart."

"Poor child. No father or mother, and so young," murmured Mrs. Lambert, her eyes again filling with tears. "And I never even knew that Franz had a child. I had forgotten even that he had married."

"You can put a cot in Carl's room," suggested Mr. Lambert; "I presume that the boy will arrive

in a day or two. And now, children, it is a quarter past seven."

Everyone rose from the table, and the day's routine began again in its accustomed groove. Mr. Lambert departed for the warehouse. Elise helped the fat young servant girl to clear away the dishes; Carl went out to bring in wood for the stove; even the twins had their household tasks which had to be finished before they started to school at eight o'clock.

But Jane went off to find her Grandmother. Behind the counter, in the bakeshop, the old woman was sitting, weeping quietly; and the slow tears of age were trickling down her wrinkled, brown face, while she strained her eyes to read the crooked awkward lines of her son's letter.

"He was a good boy," she said, taking Jane's little hand in her gnarled old one. " I understood him, never fear. He was a brave, fine boy—and he always loved his old mother. I know that. Didn't he send me this pretty shawl—"

"But Granny, darling, he may get well. Don't cry, Granny. Don't you cry." She kissed the old woman, and patted her, feeling awed and oppressed by this aged sorrow that she could not share.

After a minute, she quietly left Grandmother Winkler, and in an unusually silent, and subdued mood, went away to help the twins.

CHAPTER II

BUSYBODY JANE

At half past eight, Elise had seen that the two little girls had their books and their packages of sandwiches, and started them off to school, Carl and Jane marching behind.

"Oh, and Janey!" she called, hastening back to the doorway. "Will you remember to give those patterns back to Lily Deacon for me. I'm going to be *so* busy. Any time this afternoon will do. I put them in your school bag."

"All right," said Jane, and Elise, always busy, always placid and gentle, went back to her work.

"Well, what do *you* think about it?" Jane asked, presently. She had quite forgotten her recent friction with Carl, for quick tempered as she was, she rarely remembered a quarrel ten minutes after it occurred.

"Think about what?" said Carl, gruffly.

"About Paul's coming, of course. It's awfully sad about Uncle Franz—but it *is* sort of exciting having a new cousin to stay with us, *I* think."

"You wouldn't think it so awfully exciting if *you* had to share your room with someone you never saw in your life," returned Carl, sulkily. "I don't see why one of the store-rooms couldn't be

cleared out for him. All I know is that I won't stand for it a second if he tries to sling my things around, or scatter his all over the place."

Carl was never very enthusiastic about sharing anything with anyone (though in this instance one might sympathize with his annoyance) and his fussy love of neatness reached a degree that one would far sooner expect to find in a crabbed old maid than in a boy of sixteen years.

Jane did not reply to this indignant objection.

"What do you think he'll be like?" she asked next, scuffling through the piles of ruddy brown leaves that lay thick on the uneven brick walk.

"I think he'll be a big, roistering bully. That's what I think," answered Carl savagely; his lips set in a stubborn line, and the lenses of his spectacles glinted so angrily, that Jane decided to drop the subject.

For several minutes they walked along in silence: the twins marching ahead, chattering like little magpies, their yellow pigtails bobbing under their round brown felt hats. Each clutched her spelling book and reader, and her package of sandwiches and cookies; each wore a bright blue dress, a bright red sweater, and a snow white pinafore.

It was fully a mile to the school, but as a rule the brisk young Lamberts walked it in twenty minutes. This morning, however, Jane dawdled shamelessly.

"I don't feel like school to-day a bit," she remarked, looking up through the trees.

"You never do," returned Carl, dryly, "but you've got to go all the same. I bet you don't play hookey again in a hurry."

"H'm?" said Jane, "why not?"

"Why not?" the first really mirthful grin that Carl had shown that day spread slowly over his serious features. "Didn't you catch it hot enough last time? You're such an idiot anyway. If you'd only do your work conscientiously you wouldn't mind school. I'd hate it too if I were as big a dunce as you."

"Oh,—you would, would you, Goody-goody?" retorted Jane with spirit. "I'm not a dunce. I'm the brightest girl in my class."

"Whoo-ee!" whooped Carl, staggered by this cool conceit. "Well! If you haven't got cheek!"

"'Tisn't cheek," said Jane, calmly, "I am. I heard Dr. Andrews say so to Miss Trowbridge."

"Well—he must have been talking through his hat, then," observed Carl. "He was *probably* talking about someone else."

"No, he wasn't. They were standing outside the school-room door, at lunch-hour, and I was in there, and I heard Dr. Andrews say, 'That little Jane Lambert has brains. She's one of the brightest children—'"

"That's the trouble with you!" broke in Carl, thoroughly exasperated. "You've got such a swell-head that you won't work at all. And I don't see how anyone could say that you were

clever when you get about one problem right out of a dozen."

"I don't see how either," said Jane placidly; "but he did. Oh, look—Miss Clementina has got a new canary!"

There was no event that occurred in Fredericks-town which did not excite Jane's interest. She stopped to peer into the front window of a small brick house, where amid a perfect jungle of banana plants and ferns, a brightly gilded cage hung between two much befrilled net curtains.

"Poor old lady, I'm glad she got her bird. He has a black spot on his head just like her old one. I daresay her cat will eat him too. I wonder what she has named him. Her old one was named William." Jane giggled.

"What an idiotic name for a bird!" said Carl. Like his father, he was never amused by anything that seemed to him fantastic. "You'd better hurry up and stop peeking into everyone's window. Come on."

Jane reluctantly obeyed.

"William *is* a queer name for a bird," she agreed amicably, "but it's no queerer than calling her cat Alfred, and that awful little monkey of hers, Howard. She told me that she named her pets for all her old sweethearts."

"Her old sweethearts!" echoed Carl derisively.

"Yes. She said that she had dozens. And you know what? I believe it's true. Anyhow, she has lots of pictures of beautiful gentlemen, with black

moustaches and curly side-whiskers. I've seen the whole collection. She said she never could bear fair men."

"Humph!" said Carl.

"She said that she was dreadfully heartless when she was a girl. An awful flirt. Professor Dodge still calls on her every Sunday afternoon—all dressed up with a flower in his button-hole, and kid gloves, and a little bouquet wrapped up in wet paper. And she plays the piano for him, and sings 'Alice Ben Bolt' and 'The Mocking Bird' and 'Coming Thro' the Rye.' "

"What a busybody you are. Always prying into other people's affairs. It wouldn't hurt you to mind your own business for a while, I must say."

"I don't pry into other people's affairs," said Jane, quite unruffled. "Most of 'em seem to like to talk, and I just listen—that's all."

"There's the bell, now! Hang it, we're late. Why can't you—" but here Carl set off in a race for the school-house, outstripping the two squealing, panting twins. And in another moment, Jane, too, was scampering across the square as fast as her legs would carry her.

That was, in truth, not destined to be a very successful day for Jane. To begin with, she was marked "tardy" for the third time that month. The first classes went off passably; but she came to grief as she was congratulating herself on the fact that she had managed to scrape along fairly well.

With all her quickness and curiosity, Jane had

small love for hard study; but her aptness in gathering the general sense of a lesson at almost a glance stood her in good stead, and with very little trouble on her part she succeeded in shining quite brilliantly in history, general science, and geography. When it came to mathematics however, she met her Waterloo.

This class was presided over by Miss Farrel, a vague old lady, with near-sighted, reproachful blue eyes, and an almost inaudible voice, who taught a dry subject in the dryest possible manner.

For some reason, Jane found it more difficult than ever to keep her mind on square roots and unknown quantities that morning. Her eyes wandered longingly to the window. It was open, for the day had grown warmer toward noon, and in the quiet square an old man was raking up the fallen leaves into a row of small bonfires, and lifting them in bundles into a little wheeled cart. Patiently he limped back and forth, stopping every now and then to push his old felt hat back on his head and mop his forehead with a colored handkerchief, which in between times waved jauntily from his hip pocket. The pungent smell of leaf smoke drifted in through the window. The golden and ruddy foliage of the elm-trees and lindens made a fretted canopy over the drowsy green, through which sifted the mellow light of an Indian summer sun.

Fat Lulu Pierson's thick, glossy pig-tails next engrossed Jane's attention. She took one gently in

her fingers; the evenly clipped end of it reminded her of the brush that Sam Lung, the Chinese laundry-man used when he wrote out his receipts. She dipped it in the ink, and began to make hieroglyphics on her scratch-tablet. Then Lulu gave an impatient jerk, and the wet pig-tail just missed causing general disaster. Jane carefully took it again, dried it on her blotter, and made a serious effort to concentrate her attention by fixing her gaze gravely on Miss Farrel's wrinkled face. But she soon found that she was merely wondering why that prim old dame took the trouble to wear a little bunch of false curls across her forehead—such a remarkable cluster, as smooth and crisp as spun glass, pinned with a little bow of black taffeta ribbon. And so honestly false—certainly they could not have been selected with the intention of deceiving, for not even Miss Farrel, near-sighted as she was, could have imagined for a moment that they matched the diminutive nubbin into which her own grey locks were twisted every morning.

"Why doesn't she wear a wig? Though after all that auburn is rather nice. I don't see why she doesn't change 'em around sometimes—"

"Well, Jane, perhaps you can tell us," Miss Farrel's soft voice broke in upon these reflections, and Jane started as if she had been awakened from a sound sleep. She gasped, and then quickly recovering herself, said blandly,

"Yes, Miss Farrel."

There was a dead silence. Jane looked about

her in surprise, to find every eye in the room fixed on her.

"Well?" prompted Miss Farrel.

Jane swallowed. She had not the remotest idea what the question was. Nevertheless she made a bold attempt to conceal this fact, and with an aplomb admirable under the circumstances, said,

"I didn't exactly understand the question, Miss Farrel."

A faint tinge of color appeared upon each of Miss Farrel's cheekbones, and her almost invisible eyebrows went up.

"And what didn't you understand about it? I am sure I don't see how it could be expressed in any clearer terms. Will you repeat it to me? Then we can soon find out just where my words confused you." The old lady felt that she was being exceedingly cunning.

Jane winked her eyes rapidly, opened her mouth, shut it, and moistened her lower lip with the tip of her tongue. She knew she was cornered.

"Yes, Jane. And stand up please when you recite," said Miss Farrel in ominously gentle tones. "And don't fidget, Jane. Put that eraser down. We are waiting, Jane."

"Well, what I didn't understand was—was—I didn't understand—I didn't understand the question."

Another silence.

"Did you *hear* the question?"

"No, Miss Farrel."

"Oh. And what, pray, have you been doing?"

"Why—just thinking."

"Ah. How interesting. And what were you thinking of?"

Jane tried to keep her face straight, and looked down to hide the laughter in her eyes.

"Nothing, Miss Farrel."

Silence again. Miss Farrel opened her little black record book, and slowly and deliberately registered Jane's crime.

"Sit down, Jane. And will you please wait for me here after school. At three o'clock. Well, Isabel, will *you* give me the formula for finding the area of a circle."

Jane took her seat.

"What a goose I am, anyway," she thought, and accepted her punishment with her usual calmness.

At three o'clock, when the other girls, chattering and laughing gathered their books and left the school-room singly and in groups, she sat at her desk waiting for Miss Farrel. The cleaning woman came in, with her mop and bucket, and began to splash the dusty wooden floor. She was a talkative, good-natured old thing, and one of Jane's numerous intimates.

"Well, now, what are they keepin' you here for, this fine afternoon, Miss Janey?" she said sympathetically.

"Oh, I don't mind much. How's Amelia, Mrs. Tinker?"

"Fine. Fine, miss, thank yer."

"And how's Henry Clay?"

"He's fine, too, I thank yer."

"Is Mr. Tinker out of the hospital yet?"

"Not yet, I thank yer," said Mrs. Tinker, cheerfully. "They think as how he'll have to be there another six weeks or so. Well, I'm not one to complain against what the Lord thinks best, and I says to Henry Clay, 'Don't complain, Henry. You let well enough alone,' says I."

"Is Henry Clay the one that's going to be an undertaker?"

"That's right, miss. The boy's always had his heart set on it, and as I says to Mr. Tinker, 'Don't oppose him.' And Henry shows wonderful talent for it, miss. Wonderful."

Jane was going to ask how a precocious talent for undertaking manifested itself, when Miss Farrel appeared.

"Perhaps, Mrs. Tinker, you might work just now in one of the other rooms," she suggested with dignity. "You may return in an hour."

And then she turned her attention to Jane.

The old lady began by a plaintive little discourse on Jane's shortcomings, and on the future disasters that they would most certainly lead to. She tried to sound severe and cold, but now and then she said "my dear," and once she laid her small, old hand on Janey's. It was so difficult to be severe with Jane.

"And now, Jane, we must review all last week's work. You see how much time you lose?"

The lesson began; but it turned out that Jane was able to answer very nearly every question that Miss Farrel asked.

"Now, you see? Oh, if you would only put your mind on your work, my dear, it would really be a pleasure to teach you. My dear old teacher used to say—"

And here, veering away from the discussion of altitudes and bases, the good dame began to prattle in the friendliest way about her own girlhood, and about the little school she used to go to, way up in the country, where half the tuition was paid in salt pork and other provisions, and about her father and brothers. Everybody seemed to drift into talking about their own affairs to Jane, and Jane remembered everything they told her. There was hardly a soul in Frederickstown whose general history she was not familiar with; very simple histories for the most part, for the inhabitants of Frederickstown were simple souls, yet each had its measure of comedy and tragedy, and each had its mysterious relationship to the character of its confiding narrator.

So now Miss Farrel told her about her sister, Miss Elizabeth, who was, she said, so much the cleverer and better in every way—the last of her whole family, and crippled with inflammatory rheumatism; and about her wonderful cat, Amaryllis, and so on, and so on.

It was nearly half-past four when the old lady suddenly realized how little of the time she had

given to the lesson. Then she made a last attempt to assume her dignity.

"Well, now, my dear. Let me see. I think that if only you will train yourself—so much depends on our own selves, you know, my dear." And then after a second little discourse, delivered no doubt principally to assure herself that everything she had been saying had had some bearing on Jane's particular case, she picked up her inevitable knitting-bag, and took her departure.

Jane, remembering her promise to Elise, to return Lily's patterns, set out toward the Deacon's house.

It stood just at the top of Sheridan Lane, a sleepy, prim old street, regarded as being rather fashionable and aristocratic, principally because at the lower end of it stood the deserted Sheridan mansion, which, notwithstanding the fact that its owners had not deigned to pay any attention to it in fifteen years, was still one of the prides of Frederickstown.

The quiet street was paved with cobblestones as it descended the hill from Frederickstown itself, as far as the ancient rusty fountain, in whose basin the leaves collected in the autumn, and the birds bathed in the spring; but on the opposite side, where the hill began its rise, the street became simply a white dusty road, leading on through sweet smelling fields, over wooden bridges, where a meadow stream doubled back on itself in loops, past the Sheridan mansion, which marked the

limits of Frederickstown proper, and on to the open country.

The branches of the elm trees arched over Janey's head, and now and then, shaken by a drowsy breeze, the yellowed leaves fell noiselessly.

Through the open window of the Deacon's little parlour, came the sound of chords struck on a tinkling square piano, followed by scales and arpeggios sung in a sweet, if rather timid and unsubstantial, feminine voice.

"Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah." Chord. "Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah." Chord. And so on, patiently up the scale. Miss Deacon was practising. It was a part of her daily program, and never would it have entered Lily's head to deviate from that daily program, mapped out by her excellent but strong-minded and dictatorial mamma. Singing was a very genteel accomplishment for a young lady, and Mrs. Deacon desired above all things that Lily should be elegant.

Jane leaned on the window sill, and listened to the scales for a little while, watching Miss Lily's slender throat swell and quiver like a bird's.

"How pretty she is. If I were as pretty as that, I think I'd be perfectly happy; but she always looks sort of sad. Maybe it's because she's always being fussed at."

There was indeed no girl in Frederickstown who could claim to be quite as pretty as Lily Deacon. Slender and small, with a little tip-tilted nose, which

gave the most unexpected and charming spice of coquetry to her delicate face, with large serious blue eyes, and glossy black hair so neatly coiled on the nape of her neck, with beautifully drawn eyebrows, and a tiny mole at the corner of her under lip, accentuating the whiteness of her skin, she would have drawn her tributes of admiration from any pair of eyes that rested on her—and would have been perfectly blind to them. Lily's mother would not have allowed her for a moment to imagine that she was pretty, and Lily never thought of disobeying mamma. Prettiness, according to Mrs. Deacon's severe judgement, counted for nothing; as she had once observed, "It was only as deep as the epidermis." Elegance alone was desirable. You should never say that you were "hot"—a lady spoke of being "warm." And the word "scared" was abominable; you should speak of being "startled" or "alarmed." Lily was almost perfectly elegant. She wore a silk dress, and her pink nails were polished, and even when she sat at the piano, she was so afraid of not having her feet demurely crossed, that she did not dare to use the pedals.

"But, Miss Lily, don't you ever sing anything but scales?" demanded Jane presently. Miss Deacon jumped, put her hand to her throat, and then slowly turned her head.

"Oh—Janey! How you sc-alarmed me!"

"I'm sorry," said Jane, "Elise told me to give you these patterns. Here they are in my bag. No—I don't believe she put 'em in at all. Well,

then it's her fault this time—no, here they are."

"Thank you so much. How thoughtful of you. Won't you come in?"

"Well, you're practising, aren't you?"

Lily shook her head.

"It's nearly five. And I'm tired."

"What a lovely day it is," she got up, and came to the window, where she stood, looking up the street, one hand resting on the frame above her head. The wind ruffled her hair a little, and blew the end of her lacy kerchief against her cheek, shaking free a faint scent of sachet.

She sighed gently, and a momentary frown ruffled her smooth forehead.

"I wish—" she began impetuously, and then abruptly checked herself.

"What?" prompted Jane, curiously. For some reason, she really wanted very much to know what Miss Lily wished. But Lily shook her head, smiling a little awkwardly as if she regretted even having said so much; or as if she wasn't sure herself what she did wish. Every now and again, one caught that quick, vanishing expression in her large blue eyes, which seemed to say, "I wish—" and never got any farther.

"Oh, I don't know what I was going to say. Something foolish, no doubt," and then to change the subject, she said hastily,

"I suppose you have heard the news about the Sheridan house?"

"No! What? It isn't sold, is it? If they tear

it down, and build a horrid old factory there, I don't know what I'll do."

"Oh, no—not that. But some member of the family is going to live there again, and is already moving in."

"Why, that's nice," said Jane. What a lot of events were taking place in Frederickstown! "Do you know who it is? Man, woman or child? Any people of my age? Anybody *interesting?*"

Lily blushed slightly.

"Why, I'm not sure. I think there's only one—a Mr. Sheridan, I suppose."

"Young, old or middle-aged?" inquired Jane, who had already rather lost interest.

"Why, he seemed rather youngish," said Lily, blushing again, "but I couldn't tell very well."

"When did you see him?"

"Why, I didn't exactly see him. I heard mamma talking about it last night, and then this morning I just happened to see a carriage drive past—in my mirror, while I was doing my hair, so of course, I couldn't be sure—but, anyhow, someone was sitting in it leaning back, with a stick—but it seemed to be fairly young—though I couldn't tell," Lily explained confusedly. It seemed to her to be a little indelicate perhaps to look at a fairly young man in a mirror, while you were doing your hair."

"Um," said Jane. "Well, I suppose it's too late to go and investigate now. But I think I'll go to-tomorrow."

"Oh, Jane! You couldn't do that!" said Lily, in a shocked tone.

"Why not? How else'll I find out."

"Why, I don't know."

"Very well then. Somebody's got to know something about strangers when they come here."

"Yes—that's true," said Lily.

"Of course," said Jane. "It's what you call civic interest."

"Oh," said Lily,—she had been taught to call "it" curiosity; but then mamma's vocabulary was not like other peoples'.

"I have a tremendous amount of civic interest," said Jane, complacently, "I ought to be able to do this town a lot of good."

And with a jaunty wave of her hand, she took her leave. As she turned out of Sheridan Lane, she once more heard the light, pure tones of Lily's voice, but now they sounded a little gayer, a little warmer and sweeter than they had before, and what was more, instead of the monotonous scales, Lily was singing a pert song, which mamma, had she heard it, would probably not have thought elegant at all.

CHAPTER III

CIVIC INTEREST

YOUNG Mr. Sheridan might perhaps have grudgingly admitted that the morning was beautiful. It would have been hard even for a young man who had definitely made up his mind to be no longer pleased with anything, to deny that there was something almost pleasant in a day as soft and quiet as that June itself could bring, in a garden all enmeshed in net of stirring shadows, and in a free outlook toward hills that glowed with autumn colors.

The old "home place" wasn't so bad; rather overgrown with weeds and vines and somewhat dilapidated; the roof leaked on the third floor front, and the wooden steps at the back had broken down completely; but this crumbling and tumbling state harmonized with the state of young Mr. Sheridan's mind. He accepted it with a sort of gloomy satisfaction. This general poetic decay seemed to him quite touchingly suitable to the mood which he fully believed was to color the declining years of his short and blasted life. Mr. Sheridan had convinced himself that he had received a crushing blow; a blow that no self-respecting gentleman *ought* to survive for very long. He had convinced

himself that he neither could nor should be happy again. He had quite made up his mind that the world was a dreary waste, and all human beings, rascals and base deceivers, whose society a wise man would shun. This unfriendly humor was directed to mankind in general and to the feminine element in particular.

He had awakened that morning—his first in the old mansion—in a gigantic mahogany bed. Peterson, his servant, was kindling a fire to drive the lingering dampness out of the long unused room.

"Good morning, Mr. Tim, sir," said Peterson with objectionable cheerfulness, "I hope sir, ye had a good night?"

Mr. Sheridan eyed the old man with melancholy suspicion. He was loath to class Peterson in with the rest of the miserable human race; nevertheless, it was wiser to trust no one absolutely—not even Peterson.

"Oh, well, I suppose I slept as well as I could expect, Peterson. An owl or something woke me up at about one o'clock, and I couldn't get to sleep for hours. But still—"

As a matter of fact, Mr. Sheridan had slept as soundly as a baby, but having been entirely unconscious while he did so, he certainly could not have *known* whether he was asleep or awake. But his latest fancy was that he suffered from insomnia. Insomnia was the traditional affliction of all broken-hearted lovers, and there was no ailment common

to the broken hearted that Mr. Sheridan would allow himself to forego.

"Any letters, Peterson?"

Of course there were no letters. In the first place, who knew or cared that he had buried himself away in this forsaken corner of the earth, and in the second place, what did letters mean to him, who with all the contempt that they deserved had severed his relations with his fellow beings—especially the feminine ones—forever. He must remember not to ask Peterson again if there were any letters. Peterson might imagine that he was so weak as to hope that Miss Abbot had repented of her cruel and barbarous treatment, and under no circumstances was Peterson to imagine anything of the sort. Why, on the contrary, if Mary, that is to say, Miss Abbot—were to come to him and beg his pardon on her knees, and tell him that she knew she was a wicked coquette, and unworthy of his slightest notice, he would say to her,

"No, Mary—or, No, Madam, what you ask now is no longer in my power to give. My forgiveness is yours—gladly, but neither you nor I can revive—or, but never again, I fear, can that sweet emotion—" or anyhow, something to the effect that while he forgave her gladly—he wouldn't forgive her at all. But magnanimously. He would be very magnanimous. Nothing could be more crushing than a lofty and unapproachable kindness. He would let her know the extent of the damage she had wrought, but she should also be made to feel

that he was capable of supporting it without bitterness—to the end.

So engrossed was he in the composition of that final speech of forgiveness and farewell—which he had composed at least a dozen times already—that he absent-mindedly tucked away every morsel of Peterson's generously provided breakfast, comprising fruit and coffee, poached eggs, bacon, marmalade, and half a dozen of the most exquisite rolls he had ever eaten.

"Those rolls, Peterson—they are rather nice," he remarked, with a touch of enthusiasm that he quickly suppressed.

"Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Tim. I'm glad to have found something as pleases you, sir," said Peterson, with a perfectly grave face.

"Yes. My appetite hasn't been very good lately."

"No, Mr. Tim," agreed Peterson, tactfully.

After a short silence, Mr. Sheridan asked indifferently,

"Where did you get them?"

"Up in the town, sir. There's a Bakery there sir as I never see the like of, Mr. Tim. Why, what with the cakes and rolls and puddin's and what-not, I fairly lost me eyes, sir! You should stroll up to the town, like, Mr. Tim. It's a neat little place, sure enough—"

His young master checked him gently, reminding him with a little wave of his hand, that he could not be expected to be interested in all that.

"But the rolls, Peterson. You might see that I

have them for breakfast every morning." So saying, he lit a cigarette, and walked out through the open window into his garden to meditate; leaving Peterson to meditate in his turn on this absolutely novel way of acting that Mr. Tim had adopted. Why, he could hardly believe that this formal and taciturn gentleman was Mr. Tim at all, and the old man who remembered the days, not long since, when he had connived in all sorts of pranks and waggery; when he had, many's the time, been called in as judge and counsel as to how his young master should get himself out of this and that "scrape," when in fact, Mr. Tim never dreamed of doing anything without Peterson's opinion—remembering those jolly days when he had been honored with Mr. Tim's perfect confidence, Peterson felt wounded. Then he glanced through the window. Mr. Tim, who had been promenading back and forth, leaning on a stick, in keeping with his extraordinary notion that blighted love always left one a semi-invalid, had now allowed himself to sink wearily onto a stone bench. On second thought, Peterson did not feel wounded; he felt rather like shaking dear Mr. Tim.

"Say what you like, that's no way to go on, now. Life's too easy for him, and that's the truth, though I don't say I wouldn't hate to see it hard for him. But to take on so, just because a young lady was pleased to make up her mind not to have him! 'Tisn't every young feller has the leisure to sit and mope himself into the vapors over a chip in his

heart, that'll be whole again in three months." Then Peterson grinned. After all, such absurdities had not been entirely absent from his own youth; and he could not find it in his heart to censure Mr. Tim severely for any of his eccentricities. In his opinion this young man whom he had systematically spoiled since his childhood was not to be judged by common standards. Things that one might call faults in other young gentlemen, became merely "peculiarities" in the case of Mr. Tim. And it was not Peterson alone who inclined to shameless leniency with young Mr. Sheridan. His friends always managed to explain why it was perfectly all right for Tim to do things he oughtn't to do, and leave undone all the things he ought to do; at college his teachers were forever giving him one more chance, and at home his grumpy uncle scolded him and pampered him, and feebly allowed his usually sharp old wits to be completely fuddled by Tim's airy arguments.

"Somehow or other you'll manage to persuade all your devoted friends and wellwishers to help you to the dogs," Major Sheridan had once remarked acidly; and as proof of the truth of this, as the Major himself pointed out, the old man, notwithstanding many threats of disinheritance, had left every sou of his fortune to his nephew, simply because, while his common sense told him that the best thing in the world for the young man would be to leave him nothing at all, like Peterson he couldn't quite bear the thought of Tim's lacking anything.

At the age of twenty-seven, then, Timothy Sheridan possessed of an honorable name, health, wealth, good looks, and a very fair measure of intelligence, could consider himself sufficiently unencumbered by duties and responsibilities to indulge in the luxury of doing nothing whatever. But somebody has said that no one can be thoroughly happy without finding something to be unhappy about; and the truth of the matter is that Mr. Sheridan was exceedingly gratified to discover that his heart was broken; though it need hardly be said that this was the last thing in the world he would ever have admitted. It was such a refreshingly new experience. His only fear was that he was not getting out of it all that some people claimed to feel. He checked up all his symptoms to make sure that he had the real disease. Sleeplessness, loss of appetite, a longing for solitude—yes, he was quite sure that he had all these symptoms, and the satisfactory conclusion was that his heart *was* broken. He might really consider the matter settled. Now, what is the next thing to be done? Under the circumstances one should make no effort. One simply shunned society, amused oneself with solitary walks perhaps, looked on sceptically from afar at the insipid lives of other human beings, and made sweet melancholy a constant companion. But how long did one keep this up? The very fact that he could ask himself such a crudely practical question, made him feel rather uncomfortable; how could he even

imagine the possibility of *wanting* to do anything else?

He leaned back, and looked about him with an indifferent eye. From where he sat, he could see beyond the wall that enclosed the garden—a wall seven or eight feet high, its cracked plaster laced together by the strong black tendrils of the ivy-vine. If he turned his head he could see the whole length of Sheridan Lane. All the trees on Sheridan Lane had turned yellow, and the leaves strewing its cobblestones, looked like golden coins—the generous largess scattered in the progress of jovial King Autumn. Above the mass of frost-nipped foliage rose the rounded belfry of the old church, and underneath lay the double rows of pretty gardens all glowing with their asters and chrysanthemums.

Then, if he looked in front of him he saw those wine-tinted hills, rising beyond the gentle basin of the valley meadows, where the sun was melting the early morning frost, and scattering the light mists. Two men with leggins laced up to their sturdy knees, and carrying guns and game bags, were striding across the field, followed by their dogs. A glint of interest sparkled up in Mr. Sheridan's listless eyes.

"By Jove, I'll bet there's shooting here. I wonder if Peterson had the sense to pack my guns. I'll wire Phil to-night—" then he checked himself hastily. Such diversions were premature to say the least. But as he resumed his seat on the bench,

his attention was attracted by another object. On the wall was something which had not been there when he had last looked in the direction of Sheridan Lane. Calmly planted on its broad flat top, with a pair of slender black-stockinged legs swinging, calmly polishing off a monstrous scarlet apple on the front of a bright green sweater, sat a perfectly strange specimen of the condemned human race; and, what was more, it was unmistakably *feminine*. It was, in short, a girl of about fourteen years of age, though apparently not very tall for her years, with a dense mop of curly, reddish hair, a pair of uncommonly bright, and observant eyes, and the beaming hospitable smile of one who has the rare faculty of making herself thoroughly at home in any circumstances. Even Mr. Sheridan's cold and unmistakably hostile stare did not seem to make her feel that she was not welcome, or that she ought to offer any explanation for her presence. She looked at her apple, polished it some more, and at length fastened her sharp little teeth in its red cheek, biting off what seemed to be at least one half of the entire fruit.

After a pause, Mr. Sheridan said, with freezing courtesy,

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Oh, no," said Jane, kindly. "Nothing at all." And until she had finished her apple, and flung the core with admirable markmanship against a tree at the other side of the road, silence reigned—the silence of indignation and helplessness on Mr.

Sheridan's part, of serene composure on Jane's.

"I am just looking around," she condescended to explain at last.

"I see," said Mr. Sheridan politely. "Do you know that you are trespassing?"

"Oh, yes. But that's all right. I'm always trespassing. I can't help it. Out there—" she jerked her head in the direction of the fields, "there are signs everywhere you go, 'No trespassing.' But by the time I come to 'em I've already been trespassing for miles, so I might as well go on. Besides, I've often done it purposely just to see what would happen, but nothing ever does." And having said this in a most reassuring tone, she fished a second apple out of the pocket of her sweater and began to polish it as she had the first. To his horror, Mr. Sheridan saw that those green pockets were bulging.

"You'll make yourself ill," he remarked.

"Oh, no. I never make myself ill," said Jane.

"Are you going to eat *all* those?" he demanded, pointing with his stick at her crammed pockets.

"Well, I could, easily," said Jane, "but you can have as many as you like. Catch." And she pulled out a third apple, and tossed it to him. He caught it; but feeling that it was not dignified even to pretend that he wanted it, he laid it down beside him on the bench.

"Try it," said Jane, "it's a good one. It's still wet, because I just picked it up. Mr. Webster has millions, and he *said* I could take all I wanted.

Here, I'll dry it for you if you don't want to get your handkerchief all wet."

"Thank you," said Mr. Sheridan, "I don't believe I care for it just now."

Another silence. Then as if the idea had just occurred to her, Jane said almost with alarm,

"*You* don't mind my trespassing, do you, Mr. Sheridan?"

"How did you know my name?" he asked in surprise, and at the same time, feeling a trifle flattered. Like most people he was vain enough to be pleased when anyone seemed to know who he was without being told.

"Oh, I recognized you."

"Recognized me? When did you—"

"By your stick. Miss Lily said that you had a stick, and that you were youngish.'

"Oh." A brief pause, during which Mr. Sheridan did not look displeased. Jane, who never missed a change of expression, felt that she had hit upon a happy thread of conversation, and she ventured to commence another apple.

"Who is Miss Lily?" inquired Mr. Sheridan, forgetting that he was not in the least interested in hearing about his fellow creatures—especially the feminine ones.

"Why, Miss Lily Deacon. She lives up there," Jane jerked her head casually in the direction, "in the first house on the left hand side just as you turn into Sheridan Lane. The one with iron deers on each side of the gate. She's *very* pretty. Mrs.

Deacon is very fat, but she certainly is what you'd called impressive looking, and she does a lot of good. I mean she's on committees and things, and *always* president."

"Um," said Mr. Sheridan. Then, boring the end of his cane through a dead leaf, he asked carelessly,

"But when did Miss Lily see me? I've never been here before."

"Yesterday morning she said. She said she couldn't tell exactly what you were like, because she only saw you in her handmirror while she was brushing her hair, but *I* think she got a pretty good idea."

Poor Miss Lily. If she had ever dreamed that Jane would be placidly repeating her indiscreet little confidences, she would have died of mortification. But Jane, who, in her own peculiar way, was immeasurably more astute than Miss Lily, saw very plainly that Mr. Sheridan was trying to suppress a complacent smile.

"And how did *she* know who I was?"

"Why, in the first place, she'd heard that one of the family was going to live in this house again, and then she saw you drive in here, so she just used her common sense, I suppose."

"Ah—of course."

After a moment, he said, with the most engaging friendliness,

"I think you might tell me *your* name."

"My name? Jane."

"Jane what?"

"Lambert. Are you going to live here a long time?"

Mr. Sheridan sighed.

"I think so."

"What are you going to do?"

"Do? Well,—that would be a little difficult to explain. I came here primarily for—solitude." The melancholy tone of his voice prompted a dozen inquisitive questions to the tip of Jane's tongue.

"Oh. Are you sick?"

"There are different kinds of illness," said Mr. Sheridan gloomily and mysteriously. Jane's grave eyes considered him attentively. Perhaps he was suffering from a guilty conscience. He might have embezzled money from a bank. He might even have killed someone. She felt very sorry for him.

"Don't you ever want to see anybody? I can't understand that."

"My dear child," said Mr. Sheridan in a patronizing tone, "there are probably several things that you don't understand yet. How old are you, may I ask?"

"Fourteen. Fifteen really. My birthday comes next month. But don't you remember that it says in the Bible that it isn't good for people to be alone. That was the text just last Sunday, and I remember thinking that that was why we are all crowded together into this town, instead of scattering out over there—" she waved in the direction of the country, "where it seems much nicer."

Mr. Sheridan made no reply, for a moment. Then as Jane made a motion to depart, he said hastily,

"What do *you* do?"

"Oh, *I* go to school, and help mother, and go on adventures—"

"Go on adventures?"

"Yes. Long, long walks. Sometimes with the twins, and sometimes with Carl, though he never wants to go where I want to go, and often by myself. I take a package of bread and cheese because I get hungry very easily, or sometimes some Raisin Delights, and I pretend that I'm going out into the world to seek my fortune. And I walk and walk, sometimes taking this road and sometimes that—until it's time to turn around and come home."

"Don't you ever get lost?"

"Oh, often. That makes it more exciting than ever."

"What are Raisin Delights?"

"Oh, just sort of cookies, with raisins and cinnamon and orange peel. No one knows how to make them but mother, because you see, she's the only real Winkler—except Granny, and Granny's too old to do much in the Bakery any more. When Paul comes of course he'll learn how, because he's a real Winkler too."

"Who is Paul?"

Jane, at this, launched into the complete history of her family, charmed to find her listener who was

far more interested than he himself was aware of being.

"And—and is this Miss Lily a cousin or something of yours?" inquired Mr. Sheridan, artfully bringing the topic around to the subject that for some reason he found particularly agreeable.

"No. She's just Elise's best friend."

"And what does *she* do?"

"Oh, she practises on the piano, and sings, and embroiders, and goes to committees with her mother—though I don't think she likes that much. And then she makes up bundles of things to send to people in China, and goes to see sick people."

"Does she like that?"

"I guess so. She takes things to poor people—there are a whole lot of them who live along the creek, and she's awfully good to them."

"I see," said Mr. Sheridan. He could not think of anything more to say just then, and after a pause, Jane began to think that she ought to be going.

"Well, good-bye. I hope you'll feel better after a while," she said, catching hold of a low hanging branch, preparatory to swinging herself down to earth.

"Thank you." Mr. Sheridan did not understand why he felt just a trifle foolish. "I hope you will pay me another visit."

"Oh, but I thought you wanted to be alone," said Jane, innocently.

Mr. Sheridan hesitated.

"People in general are terrible nuisances," he said, at length. "I came here to avoid the boredom—that is, at present I am very little in the mood for being bothered by the curiosity of a host of friends and acquaintances. But on the other hand, it would be a pleasure to chat with you now and then."

Jane was tremendously flattered.

"Oh, I can understand that perfectly," she said, nodding her curly head with a great air of wisdom. "Well, I'll come and see you again. Aren't you really going to eat that apple?"

Mr. Sheridan laughed, and tossed it back to her.

"There you are, Eve. Like Adam, I'd be much better without it."

With the agility of a monkey, Jane, holding the apple between her teeth, swung herself lightly and easily to the ground. A little later Mr. Sheridan saw the curly auburn head and the green sweater moving up the hill, and with the feeling that he would very much like to be going in the same direction, toward that busy little town—yes, in the very same direction of that human society which he had resolved to shun—he turned away.

He had already begun to doubt his wisdom in allowing this slight infringement of the iron rule of seclusion he had resolved to follow. Already he felt very little inclined to spend the rest of the morning going over the battalions of musty volumes in the Major's library, as he had planned,—his idea had been to bury his sorrows in grave

bookishness. Already he found himself possessed by a desire to venture out beyond the security of his garden. And if he had followed Janey up the hill, if he had seen her stop for a few moments, at the gate of the house on the left hand side, to report to a demure and shocked and vastly interested young lady on various features of her late venture, he would have felt that all his doubts on the wisdom of allowing anything feminine within thirty yards of him, were more than justified.

CHAPTER IV

THE APPEARANCE OF PAUL

JANE lay on her stomach, stretched out comfortably on the window-seat in Granny's room, her elbows propped on a cushion, her chin in her hands and a book open on another cushion. The light was already waning, for the days were growing perceptibly shorter, and furthermore the afternoon had been dark and stormy. A driving autumn rain pattered steadily against the window, drummed on the roof, gushed from the drain pipes, and angrily stripped the branches of the trees of their gaudy foliage. Now, only the stark black boughs creaked in the wind; here and there one stubborn brown leaf still clung to a twig, but you could see the whole lead grey sky clearly, and the irregular outlines of glistening roofs.

But Granny's room, always cosy, was cosiest when the outside world was bleakest. A coal fire glowed brightly in the old fashioned open stove, reflecting in the window panes, on the elaborately carved head-board of the great four-poster bed, and in the plump, bulging surfaces of the well-polished pewter jugs which stood in a row along the shelf—treasured heirlooms, glistening self-complacently, as if they knew that they had out-

lived four generations of human beings. Granny's room, was in fact, a regular museum; a big, speckled sea shell served as the door prop; chunks of rock sparkling with mica lay on each side of the stove; a stuffed owl, with only one glass eye stared down from the lintel of the door. Wherever you looked you saw some singular object which interested you simply because you could not imagine what it was for, why it had been treasured, or how it had ever got into Granny's room in the first place. But there was not an article that Granny would not have missed sadly if it had been removed. Each curiosity had its particular association which made it valuable to her; each was linked to some memory, and she could not have parted with one without parting with the thing it stood for.

The atmosphere, warm almost to the point of suffocation, was permeated with a peculiar, and far from unpleasant odor, of apples, spices, and camphor, emanating from the gigantic chest on one side of the room. Like all good Winklers, Granny had a sweet tooth, which was one reason why the young Lamberts found her society so desirable. To be sure, some people might not care much for the flavor of camphor or cedar in their candied orange peel, or Smyrna figs, but it was inseparable from Granny's tid-bits, and her grandchildren had cultivated an especial taste for it.

The twins sat on the floor in front of the fire, playing with their paper dolls, while Granny nodded over the many-coloured quilt she was knitting, hap-

pily unconscious of the fact that Phyllis, her maltese cat, had playfully carried the ball of red wool off to a far corner, and was gleefully tangling it around the legs of the dressing table. Every now and then a burst of fresh laughter from one of the flaxen haired twins roused her, and she smiled sympathetically, and for a little while listened to their chatter; then her head drooped again, her steel-rimmed spectacles slid down on her nose, and lulled by the heat of the fire, the drumming of the rain, and the sound of their soft, happy voices, she dozed off peacefully.

Lottie, looking up, and seeing that Jane was no longer engrossed in "John Halifax," ventured to suggest timidly,

"Will you play with uth, Janey?"

Occasionally, Jane condescended to forget her fifteen years, and to take part in their infantile games.

"All right." She rolled herself off the window seat. "Want to play 'French Revolution'?" Jane had little taste for the domestic character of the twin's doll games.

"How do you play that?" asked Minie.

"Why, first of all you get me some books out of my room," ordered Jane, and Minie obediently trotted off to return grunting under the burden of "stage properties."

"Now, you see, build a prison out of 'em," went on Jane; "this is the Conciergerie, and it has to be full of prisoners; princesses and duchesses, and of course Marie Antoinette. Now, we'll make a

guillotine, and chop all their heads off. Don't you think that'll be fun?"

The twins were enchanted. Lottie piled the books into a "scaffold," while Minie sat by, clashing the scissors, eagerly. And presently, one by one, the poor paper prisoners were marched to their doom, Jane directing the carnage, describing the history of each victim, like a Greek chorus, and delivering their last speeches, while Minie, hypnotized into passive obedience, snipped off the paper heads of her innocent, and dearly treasured dolls.

Suddenly Jane jumped up.

"I think this is an *awful* game!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, Jane, aren't you going to play any more?" cried Lottie in dismay. Jane shook her head.

"And all my poor dollies are dead!" wailed Minie, suddenly realizing the extent of the disaster. Jane looked really guilty.

"We can make some more," she said hastily; "there are lots of old magazines in mother's room."

"But you can't make Isabel again," wept Minie.

"Well, *you* cut her head off," said Jane.

"But *you* told her to," cried Lottie, taking up her twin's cause.

"Well, you asked me to play with you, didn't you?" But Minie's tears went to Jane's heart. "I'm sorry, Minie, darling. Please don't cry. I'll tell you a story if you like."

Minie's chubby, tearful face brightened.

"A fairy story?"

"Yes. About a prince and princess."

"And you won't have it end up badly?"

"No. I promise." So Jane, whose mind was a perfect storehouse of stories and legends, had soon charmed the twins into forgetfulness of their late bereavement while she launched forth upon her tale of giants and enchanted princes.

* * * * * * *

On this very afternoon, and in fact, at exactly the time that Jane had staged her disastrous amusement, a boy was tramping stolidly with his head bent against the rain, along one of the country roads a good three miles from Frederickstown. He was a big, raw-boned boy, whose shabby clothes originally much too loose for his lean frame, and now soaked through, gave him an almost grotesque appearance. A faded dark blue cap, with a patent leather visor, such as sea-captains wear, and the upturned collar of his coat, almost concealed his long brown face, in which the most striking features were a pair of black eyes, set rather close together, and a big handsome Roman nose. With a bundle slung over his shoulder on the end of a stick, he looked like any one of the foreign immigrants who were frequently seen seeking for work as laborers on the neighboring farms.

He did not raise his head until he reached a cross-roads. Then he stopped, pushed back his cap from his face, which was flushed and hot from his long walk, and looked up at the signs. On the left, the white board, roughly carved into the semblance of a pointing finger, read, "Fredericks-

town, 2½ Miles." The name on the right-hand sign-post was too badly damaged by weather to be intelligible to a stranger's eyes; only the distance, "30 miles" was legible.

There was no reason why the boy should have hesitated for a moment; his destination was Frederickstown, the second direction did not concern him in the least; and yet, perhaps because the vagueness of the destination of the second road appealed to his imagination; perhaps because the greater distance lent it greater charm, and the very impossibility of walking thirty miles that day made it seem the more desirable, at any rate there he stood, looking uncertainly to the right, then to the left, and back to the right again. A gust of wind, flapping the skirts of his coat rudely, seemed to shove him forward, as if impatient of his indecision, but he planted his feet firmly, and continued to gape uncertainly up at the sign posts. "I'll make up my own mind, thank you, and I'm not to be hurried," was the reply which his determined attitude made to the impatience of the wind.

There was little difference in the features of the country traversed by the two roads; all that he could see through the blur of the rain, were bleak fields, muddy furrows, here and there a clump of leafless trees, the skeleton of a forest, or, down in a hollow the sheds and barns of a little farm. A cheerless prospect for a hungry and footsore wanderer.

Behind him he heard the weary splashing of a

horse's feet, and the creaking of wheels. He turned around. A covered wagon, drawn by a tired, steaming horse was approaching.

"Hey!" he hailed the driver, who pulled in the horse to a stand-still, and thrust out a grizzled face from under the canvas.

"Where does that road go to?" asked the boy, pointing to the right.

The driver tilted his hat, scratched his head, and straightened his hat again before replying, thus gaining time to cast a shrewd eye over the appearance of the questioner. He was one of those excellent back-country farmers who regard every stranger with suspicion, and do not like to be hurried into speech.

"That road," he said at length, "goes to the City—thirty miles. Going to walk it, stranger?"

"Which way are you going?"

The farmer jerked his head in the direction of Frederickstown.

"Will you let me go with you?" asked the boy, feeling nervously in his pocket. "I cannot pay you much, but I will gladly give you what I can." He pulled the last coin out of his pocket, and looked at it uncertainly as if he were not at all sure how much it was. "I will give you twenty-five cents."

"That's all right. Keep your money, young feller, and get in if you want to. I'll be glad of yer company."

The boy looked surprised and grateful, and without wasting any more words, clambered up to the

hard wooden seat, and settled himself beside the farmer.

The road was rough, the wheels were rimmed with iron, and the board seat joggled unmercifully, so that the boy found it hard to answer his neighbor's endless questions without biting his tongue in two; moreover, now that he was sitting down, after walking almost steadily since early morning, he found himself almost too tired to think; but he tried to be civil, since it seemed that if his companion was kind enough to refuse payment, the least he could do was to gratify his curiosity.

"Where might you be goin', now?"

"My uncle lives in Frederickstown. His name is Lambert. Mr. Peter Lambert."

"That so? I know Mr. Lambert. Well, I took you for a furriner."

"I am not a foreigner."

"Not but that you don't talk good English, only sort of care-ful like. Like it wasn't yer natural langwidge. What part of the country might yer be from, now?"

"I have never been in this country before. My father, who—who was Mr. Lambert's brother-in-law, was a sailor, captain, also a trader. I don't belong to any country. I have come back to work with my uncle, because my father is dead, and I have no other relatives." The boy explained this in a dry, precise way, as if it were an answer that he had already had to make many times.

"Well! I'll be!" exclaimed the farmer, much

interested. "And what might yer name be, young feller?"

"Paul Winkler."

After a short pause, during which Paul fervently hoped that the catechism was over, his companion asked again.

"And why was you askin' me where that other road went to?"

The boy smiled, and shook his head.

"I don't know."

"Jes' for curiosity?"

"Yes."

"Hum. How old might you be?"

"Seventeen."

"Yer a well grown lad for yer years. I should have taken yer to be older."

This time Paul broke the silence that followed.

"What is the City like?"

"Like? Why like any other city. Lots of houses, lots of streets, lots of people, lots of noise. I'm a countryman myself, and don't have much hankerin' for the big towns. Though there's my son now, my second boy, he can't stand the farm. No, he has to be off to the city. I suppose that's the way all you youngsters are feeling nowadays. What you're after is always somewhere different from where the Lord put you. Opportunity—that's what my boy's forever chatterin' about—you got to get where you have opportunities. I says to him, 'Well, Tom, what is it ye're after?' 'Independence, Dad,' says he, 'Like

George Washington.' 'A good thing,' says I. 'And what do ye call independence?' Well, sir, we argue away for hours, and for the life of me I can't see that he ain't just about the most *de* pendant feller I know. No sir, when ye live the sort of life I live ye get plenty time to think, and I tell ye when ye sift down to rock bottom just what ye *do* want, and don't dress it up in a lot of fine words, ye find that there's precious little as really matters to ye, that ye can't get without having to trot all over the country after it."

Notwithstanding his companion's challenging tone, and evident eagerness for further discussion, Paul made no reply to this speech.

They had now gained the top of a hill; and at last the comfortable lights of Frederickstown shone through the dusk.

"There ye are," said the farmer pointing ahead with his whip, "and I've no doubt it's a glad sight to ye, youngster. Have ye walked far?"

"Fifteen miles, I think."

"Fifteen miles! Pretty hungry, eh?"

"Yes."

"Did ye come across the water alone?"

"No. There was a friend of my father's travelling to this country also. I left him last night."

Now the wagon was jolting over the cobblestones, jarring every bone in Paul's weary body. And, he was so hungry! All at once he caught the odor of spices, of fresh ginger-bread—such a friendly smell, such a homey, domestic smell,

that made you think of a warm hearth, and familiar faces—

The horse stopped.

"Well, young man, I guess we part now."

Paul felt as if he were asleep. He climbed stiffly out of the cart, shook the friendly, horny paw that his erstwhile companion thrust out, and tried to mutter his thanks. The wagon rumbled away up the street—and here he was.

He stood in the shelter of the quaint wooden balcony which extended from the second story of the Lambert's dwelling out over the pavement. In front of him the light shone cheerily through the bakeshop window. Somehow, he rather dreaded to go up and knock at the door. Suppose that after all it was the wrong place? Suppose that no one knew that he was coming? Or, suppose that they wouldn't believe he was Paul Winkler?

* * * * * * *

"So the prince took his knife and cut the third of the golden apples in half, and to his astonishment—"

"Janey, *who* is that talking to your father?" demanded Granny, opening her eyes suddenly.

Jane stopped and listened. Granny's room was directly over the dining room, and sounds carried easily through the thin walls of the old house.

"I don't know, Granny," said Jane. "Nobody in particular, I guess."

But the old lady felt nervously for her stick.

"Heavens! It *couldn't* be— Janey, just run to

the head of the stairs and see. Minie, darling, do you see Granny's stick? Run, Janey—just peep over."

But the door of the dining room was half closed, and Janey, hanging over the bannister, had to wait several moments before she caught a glimpse of the stranger, whose low voice occasionally interrupted her father's eloquent talk.

"My dear boy, we will go into this at length, later this evening. I see that you are tired now. You say you *walked* from Allenboro?"

"It was necessary. I did not discover that my money had been stolen until after I left the ship."

"Did Mr. Morse know of your misfortune?"

"No. I did not tell him."

Then Jane caught her first glimpse of the speaker, as he took a step back toward the fireplace, and into her line of vision through the half opened door.

"It's *Paul!*" The thought flashed across her mind instantly. Her first impression of her new cousin was disappointing. Though such matters rarely counted for much with Jane, she was really shocked by the shabbiness of his appearance; for covered as he was with mud, his ill-fitting, outworn clothes made him look like a veritable ragamuffin. But it was not this so much as his whole bearing and expression that displeased her. There was something both sullen and stubborn in his face, which, combined with lines of weariness and hunger, made him seem much older than he really was, and decidedly unattractive. And she had been

so sure that she was going to like her new cousin; she had pictured him as a jolly, ruddy, lively boy, who would probably enter heart and soul into her enjoyments; someone with whom you could make friends in five minutes; whereas unsociability was stamped on every feature of *this* boy's sallow, unsmiling face.

Just then the sharp tapping of Granny's cane resounded through the corridor. The old lady's singular impatience to know who the stranger was, had not allowed her to wait for Jane's tardy report. With her cap askew, she appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Who is it? Who is it?" she demanded, almost breathlessly. "Stand aside, child." And without waiting for a reply, she descended the stairs with wonderful rapidity, marched to the dining room door, and flung it open.

"Peter! Gertrude!" she blinked nervously into the room, where only the firelight illumined the two figures in the dusk. Then she stared into Paul's face. It was only a moment before her uncertainty disappeared.

"I knew it! I knew it!" she cried. "Peter Lambert, why didn't you tell me? Ah, heaven's! My dear boy, *I* am your old Granny!" And weeping from sheer joy, she unhesitatingly flung her arms around his neck and kissed him.

A few moments later the entire family had collected to welcome the newcomer. The twins with their round blue eyes fastened on him gravely,

clung to their mother, who kissed him warmly, exclaimed over his size, and at once began to worry affectionately about his wet clothes. Elise greeted him with her usual gentle, modest smile, Carl with a patronizing, "How do you do, cousin?" and a keen glance, as if he were "sizing up" an opponent of some sort.

During these proceedings Paul looked utterly bewildered, and exceedingly awkward, as if he could not believe that all these good people who were smiling at him, shaking hands with him, and asking him if he were tired, were really his family. All that interested him was the fact that he smelt supper cooking.

Last of all to welcome him was Jane, who had stood aside, watching him intently; and it was he who turned to her, and with the polite smile that he had forced for the occasion, held out his hand.

"How do you do, cousin?"

"How do you do, cousin Paul?" repeated Jane decorously.

Jane was not over impulsive, and she had not yet made up her mind as to the degree of liking she felt for this tall, reticent youth, this sober, chilly, self-assured boy, whom Destiny had now placed at the head of the House of Winkler.

CHAPTER V

PAUL HESITATES

"Poor child, you are dripping wet! You'll catch your death of cold!" cried Mrs. Lambert, noticing Paul's state for the first time. "What can I be thinking of! You must have a hot bath and some dry things at once. Carl, take Paul up to your room, dear, and see that he makes himself *very* comfortable. I must see to supper. You must be starving, too!"

Accordingly, Carl undertook his duties as host as hospitably as he could, and Paul followed him upstairs.

In a moment or two Carl returned, wearing the prim expression of one who would like to express his opinion, and is merely waiting to be asked, and at length, one by one, the family began, naturally enough, to discuss the impression that the newcomer had made on them, severally. The criticisms were very kindly, but at the same time, it soon became clear that so far no one felt any great enthusiasm for the stranger. His curt manner had hurt his aunt and his grandmother, who had been so eager in their welcome to the fatherless boy, and had irritated Mr. Lambert. The short, brusque answers he had given to the endless kindly questions

with which he had been plied, had discouraged the well-meant, and very natural curiosity of his relatives, and had made them feel rather uncomfortable.

Grandmother Winkler and Mrs. Lambert staunchly insisted that the poor boy was only lonely and unhappy; but down in their hearts they had been sadly disappointed in Franz's son. Elise also ranged herself in his defense, feeling that any disapproval, expressed or unexpressed, of the new head of the clan, was a form of treason.

"Think how you would feel, Carl," she said, "if you had lost your father, and had landed in a strange country among strangers—for after all we *are* strangers to Paul."

"That's all right," returned Carl, "I could understand it if he were just gloomy. But I don't see any reason why he has to be downright disagreeable."

"I'm sure he doesn't mean to be disagreeable, my dear," said Mrs. Lambert.

"Well, we mustn't lose any time in getting the boy settled down to his work," said Mr. Lambert. "That will take his mind off his own troubles. I shall have a talk with him after supper."

"I shook hands with him, and said I was glad to see him, and he just stared at me as if I were a—a fish," went on Carl, still dwelling on his own grievances. "I know he's here to stay, and I'll try to get on with him, though I'll tell you right now, it's not going to be an easy job. And I hope to goodness I won't have to room with him perma-

nently, mother. Can't you find somewhere to put him? Can't you—" Carl broke off abruptly, reddening, for at that moment Paul entered the room. He was scrubbed and brushed, and, dressed in Mr. Lambert's summer suit, looked vastly better than the young tramp who had entered their midst an hour before. Unfortunately he had overheard Carl's remark, and his expression had changed from one that was almost friendly to the stony, immobile look that absolutely altered the whole character of his face. The cozy family scene in the dining room, where now the table had been set, and the lamp lighted, and where the firelight shone upon the faces of three generations, from Granny to little Minie, had done much to make Paul feel that he would be happy after all among these simple, happy people—until his quick ears caught Carl's unkind remark.

Only Jane had seen the look that showed he had overheard; but everyone felt that he had, and an awkward little silence followed his entrance, during which Elise glanced at her brother in distress, and Mrs. Lambert struggled to think of something to say that would mend matters a little. But Carl met his cousin's eyes defiantly, and from that moment the tacit hostility of the two boys was sealed.

So Paul, who had been on the verge of thawing a little, had frozen up again. He concluded immediately that *everyone* disliked him, and like many sensitive people, instead of attempting to overcome this imagined dislike, he carefully hid all

that was winning in his nature, under his cold, unsympathetic manner. He even fancied that his aunt's affectionate little attentions were only assumed to hide her real feelings. Poor Aunt Gertrude! No one in the world was less capable of insincerity than she, and her gentle heart ached over the forlorn, taciturn youth.

Supper was a decidedly uncomfortable meal; and Paul, who had felt that he could have eaten the proverbial fatted calf, found it difficult to swallow a mouthful. During the journey there had been too much to occupy him, too many difficulties and strange events for him to think much about the abrupt change that had taken place in his life; but now, as he sat with his eyes on his plate, in the midst of these strange faces, he felt as if the bottom had dropped out of everything. A perfect wave of depression engulfed him, and all he wished for was to get off by himself.

"Well, my boy, are you too tired to have a little talk?" asked Mr. Lambert, at length pushing back his chair.

"No, sir," muttered Paul, curtly, thinking to himself, "I don't suppose that they want to have me on their hands any longer than is necessary."

"Children, you may prepare your lessons in your own rooms to-night. Well, Paul, suppose you and I get over here into my corner," suggested Mr. Lambert, walking across to his desk. "Sit down."

Paul sat down, folded his hands in his lap, and fixed his eyes attentively on the window. The rain

still rattled on the glass panes, and the wind banged the shutters, and moaned through the leafless trees.

"I am only going to acquaint you with the wishes which your father—my poor brother—expressed in a recent letter," began Mr. Lambert, rummaging through his orderly pigeon-holes. "It might be best for you to read it for yourself." But Paul declined the letter with a gesture.

"Ah, well," said Mr. Lambert, replacing the poor, blotted sheets in the envelope, "I don't want to pain you, my dear boy, and I would not touch on the subject at all, if I did not feel that it were best for you to find something to occupy your thoughts at this time." He paused, but as Paul did not seem to think it necessary to make any reply, he continued:

"You must understand how deeply I am interested in your affairs. Er—how old are you?"

"Seventeen, sir."

"Seventeen? I should have thought you were older. But seventeen is not an age of childhood, and in any event I feel that you are fully capable of assuming the responsibilities which must fall upon you as the only—living—male descendant—of—the Winkler Family." Mr. Lambert uttered these last words with an impressiveness that cannot be described. Paul looked up, suddenly interested, and with a wary, defensive expression.

"No doubt your father acquainted you with his wishes?"

"My father told me to come to you, and that you would help me," said Paul.

"Help you? Indeed I will help you. I would help you in any event because you are my nephew, and blood runs thicker than water, my boy. Always remember that. But believe me, it is not family duty alone that impels me to give you all the assistance I can,—I feel that you are a young man who is *worthy*—worthy to enter upon the duties of your position."

Paul was puzzled. He could not understand these allusions to his "position," and his "responsibilities."

"Never hesitate to come to me for any advice. Do not allow little discouragements to overwhelm you," continued Mr. Lambert. "Your aunt, of course, will be your real teacher—"

"My *aunt?*" echoed Paul, completely bewildered. "I don't understand—"

"Ah," said Mr. Lambert, smiling, "perhaps you are not familiar with the traditions of your family. Then, I will tell you; your great-great-grandfather, on your father's side, Johann Winkler, was, as you surely know, the founder of this Bakery. He was, moreover, the inventor of certain delicacies which have made it famous, and which cannot possibly be made by any other baker in this country—in the world, I may say. It was his wish that the fruits of his labors should be the heritage of his descendants, and that only those who bore the name of Winkler, should learn the secret

recipes by which those cakes are mixed. A moment's thought will make it clear to you that you are the next in line to be initiated into these secrets, which are sealed from me, and my children. In a word, you are the only living heir to this business. Your aunt, of course, is the present proprietor, and she and she alone can instruct you in the work in which you must follow her."

Paul was speechless, and Mr. Lambert, mistaking his astonished silence, for a calm acceptance of what he had said, now drew forth a large parchment from a drawer of his desk, and spread it out with a pompous air.

"This, my boy, is the family tree of the Winklers, which establishes your claim to your inheritance. Here, you see—" his broad forefinger began to trace the branches, Johann Winkler had two sons, Frederick and Samuel. Frederick, the elder had two sons, also Samuel and Johann. In this case, the younger became the Baker, and Samuel became a hardware merchant in Missouri. Thus, Johann was the father of your Aunt Gertrude, and *your* father, who also relinquished his inheritance, like Esau—"

"But what of Samuel's children?" stammered Paul. "Maybe he has a son or a grandson—"

"However that may be they have forfeited their claims," replied Mr. Lambert. "No, you need have no fears of any disputes, my boy. Surely, your father must have acquainted you with all these matters which relate to you so closely."

"My father never even mentioned anything of the sort!" exclaimed Paul, pushing back his chair, as if he were thinking of sudden flight.

"I need hardly tell you that you are doubly welcome, my dear boy," continued Mr. Lambert placidly, totally misunderstanding Paul's astonishment.

"But, sir! One moment! I don't understand! You surely can't mean that you think I am going to learn how to *bake bread,* and make *pies!*" burst out Paul at last. "Great heavens! My father couldn't have dreamed— *I!* Making biscuits!"

"And why not, pray?" demanded Mr. Lambert, sharply. "Am I to understand that you consider yourself too good for a profession that the great Johann Winkler thought worthy of his genius? Is it that you do not consider it *manly?* Surely, you do not mean me to understand this?" Mr. Lambert's face hardened a little; the expression of bland benevolence left his eyes, which now grew cold and piercing. He had not expected rebellion, but recovering quickly from his surprise he prepared to cope with it as only he could.

"Of course I don't mean that, sir!" exclaimed Paul. "But don't you see—I can't—I'm not fitted for such work. I coultn't learn how to bake a pie in a life time. I—"

"Oh, I am sure you underrate your intelligence, my boy. Don't give way to discouragement so soon. A little patience, a little industry—"

Paul began to laugh, almost hysterically. Even

in the midst of his serious anxiety, the idea of himself demurely kneading dough was too much for his gravity.

"But I'd poison everyone in town in twenty-four hours! Bake bread! Rolls! Tarts! Sir, I could far more easily learn how to trim hats!"

"I don't doubt it. Any silly schoolgirl can learn that. I freely admit that the art of a great baker is not readily acquired. I admit that in some measure it requires an inborn gift, and a gift that is by no means a common one. Great cooks are far rarer, believe me, than great orators, or great artists, although the world in general does not rank them as it should. There was a time when a fine pastry or a sauce composed with genius called forth the applause of kings, and when eminent bakers were honored by the noblest in the land. But to-day, through the ignorance and indifference of the world, the profession is fallen in value, because, forsooth, it is fancied that it caters to the less noble tastes of mankind. My dear boy, it is for you, in whose veins flows the blood of the King of Bakers, to maintain the fame and dignity of your profession. Do not imagine that you lack the gift. It has lain idle, but a little practice will soon prove that it is in your possession."

Paul feeling that he had come up against a wall of adamant, got up and began to pace the floor. Here he was with exactly twenty-five cents in his pocket, without even a suit of clothes that deserved the name, without a friend within three thousand

miles, nor the faintest idea of where he could go, if he rashly broke away from the family roof-tree.

"It seems that you had other ideas," remarked Mr. Lambert in a politely interested tone, which said, "I don't mind *listening* to any of your fantastic notions." Paul hesitated. He most certainly *had* had other ideas, and, what was more, he did did not have the slightest intention of relinquishing them. The question was, could he lay them simply before his uncle? One glance at Mr. Lambert's smooth, practical face was sufficient to make him feel that anything of the sort was not to be considered; certainly not at this time, in any case. Mr. Lambert had fixed his mind on one idea, and tenacity was his most striking characteristic. It was his boast that he never changed his mind, and the truth of this statement was recognized by everyone who had any dealings with him.

"I should like to think over all that you have said, Uncle Peter," Paul at length said warily. "All this has been very unexpected, and I don't know just what to say."

"You mean that you are still doubtful as to whether you will accept or reject the position, to which Providence has called you, and which it is plainly your Duty to accept?" inquired Mr. Lambert, raising his eyebrows. He was surprised and annoyed by his nephew's resistance, but knowing the boy's circumstances he had no fear that Paul would decide against his own wishes.

Paul was quick to perceive this underlying

cocksureness, and his whole soul rose in rebellion.

"I don't see that either Providence or Duty has anything to do with the case," he retorted, instantly firing up.

Mr. Lambert shrugged his shoulders.

"You do not feel that you are under obligations to your Family? I don't like to believe that you have so slight a sense of your responsibilities. No, I am sure that a few moments reflection will convince you to the contrary. By all means consider the matter. I should, however, like to have your answer to-night, if it is convenient for you. I have several letters to write, and shall be here when you have reached your decision." And with a curt nod, he swung around to his desk, and took up the old-fashioned goose-quill pen, which he was in the habit of using under the impression that it lent him an air of business solidity.

Paul, lost in thought, went up to Carl's room for the "few moments of reflection" that his uncle had advised.

His cousin, wearing a brown dressing gown, with a hideous pattern of yellow fleurs-de-lis, was sitting at the table, with a book in his hands, and a greenshade over his nearsighted eyes, engrossed in his studies. The two boys glanced at each other, and nodded brusquely without speaking.

Paul threw himself across the bed.

"Duty! Providence!" All he could see in the matter was that he had got into a pretty kettle of fish. "And uncle thinks that just because I'm

broke, I'll knuckle under without a murmur."

Obligations! That was a nice thing to preach to him.

"Would you mind not kicking the bed?" said Carl's thin, querulous voice. "It makes it rather hard to concentrate." This petition, uttered in a studiedly polite tone, was accompanied by a dark look, which this time, however, Paul failed to see.

"Sorry," said Paul, gruffly, and got up.

Now he began to walk the floor; but at length stopped at the window, pressing his face to the glass so that he could see something besides the reflection of his cousin's mouse-colored head, and monotonous rocking in his chair.

He peered out over the roofs of the town, up the street, all sleek and shining with the rain, in the direction of the cross-roads at which he had stood, less than four hours ago. Why hadn't he taken the Other One, anyway? He had been perfectly free to choose—no one had been preaching Duty and all the rest of it to him then. He hadn't taken it, because he had been tired and hungry, and almost penniless—and lonely, too, and the farmer had turned up. Perhaps he had been a coward. It had led to the City, where, even if he were penniless, he would at least have been his own master, free to work according to his own ideas, and not Uncle Peter's.

"Would you mind not whistling!" snapped Carl. "It's the most maddening sound. Hang it! I'm trying to study."

Paul's mournful whistling stopped.

Baking pies! So that was to be his future, was it? Well, he still had something to say. It wasn't too late to take the other road yet. He'd walk a *thousand* miles before he would let himself be trussed up in a canvas apron, and put to kneading dough for the rest of his days.

He glanced around for his cast off clothes, and saw them hanging, still dismally wet over a chair. But not even the cheerless prospect of a clammy shirt dampened his resolution. He began to fling off his dry clothing, sending collar, necktie, socks and shoes flying in all directions.

Presently Carl, aroused by the commotion, put down his book. Then he stared in astonishment, at the sight of his cousin rapidly climbing into the soaking, muddy garments. But he felt that it was not in keeping with the dignity he had assumed, to inquire into the reasons for this strange proceeding. All he said was,

"Would you mind not shaking that mud over my things?"

Without replying, Paul shouldered his ridiculous bundle, felt in his pocket to make sure that his quarter was still there, and marched out of the room, down the stairs, and to the door.

Then it occurred to him that this abrupt departure, without a word of farewell to anyone was rather a shabby way of returning the hospitality he had received, and he hesitated.

"Well, if I don't get out now, it'll mean a lot

of argument and explanation. I could write a note." But he had no paper, and he did not want to go back to Carl's room. So there he stood uneasily enough, wriggling in his damp clothes, and glancing uncertainly toward the closed door of the dining room behind which his uncle sat waiting for his decision. Overhead, he heard the low murmur of his aunt's voice, and the thudding of the twins' little bare feet as they romped and squealed in a pillow fight. Paul felt his resolution waver, and then anger at his own weakness steadied his determination. He opened the door, strode out, and pulled it to quietly behind him.

A wild gust of wind nearly robbed him of his breath, and made him stagger. The rain had gathered up its forces, and now came down in a solid sheet, swept this way and that by the wind.

"Whew!" Paul bent his head, and ploughed his way against it, without looking to the right or to the left. The branches groaned and tossed, creaking as if they were being torn from the trunks of the swaying trees.

Then all at once, with a crash a dead bough fell in front of him, missing him by not more than fifteen inches. Paul stopped. The very elements seemed opposed to his unmannerly flight, and again he hesitated, looked back, and saw the friendly, ruddy windows of the Bakery. Thirty miles in this tempest! He smiled sheepishly, and then frowned. His impetuousness had put him in a very ridiculous position. His pride rebelled at the

idea of returning, and with the thought of Carl's smothered amusement, came the memory of his cousin's inhospitable speech. On the other hand, he saw that it was no less absurd to follow up his plan of flight, and the streak of common sense underlying his hasty, high-handed nature told him that it was less foolish to go back and undertake the immediate problem that had been thrust upon him, than to plunge himself into the serious difficulties that his adventure would entail. And at length, inwardly raging at his own folly, he retraced his steps.

As the dining room door opened, Mr. Lambert looked up, started to remove his spectacles, and then with a start, adjusted them more accurately. Paul, who had left his cap and bundle in the hall tried to stand in the shadow so that his clothes would not be noticed. After a short silence, Mr. Lambert preferring to observe nothing extraordinary in his nephew's appearance, folded up his spectacles, put them in the breast pocket of his frock coat and said, pleasantly,

"Well? What have you decided?"

Paul cleared his throat.

"I have decided—I have decided—" he finished by spreading his hands and shrugging his shoulders.

"To undertake your—er—responsibilities?" prompted Mr. Lambert, as if he were administering an oath.

"To learn how to bake pies," said Paul, feebly,

and then mumbling some vague excuse he backed out of the room, leaving Mr. Lambert to indulge in a short chuckle.

Paul hid himself in the bakeshop until he felt reasonably sure that his cousin had gone to bed, and then, boots in hand tiptoed shamefacedly up to the bedroom, and began to undress in the dark. But Carl was not asleep, and after listening to Paul's smothered exclamations as he struggled with wet button holes and laces, could not resist a polite jibe.

"Oh," came in interested tones from the bed, "where did you go, cousin?"

"For a walk," replied Paul, laconically, and a certain note in his voice warned Carl that it would be wiser not to refer to the delicate subject again.

CHAPTER VI

A REBEL IN THE HOUSE

"You take a tablespoonful of butter, a pound of sugar, half a teaspoonful each of cinnamon and all-spice, a pound of raisins, and a cupful of molasses," said Aunt Gertrude timidly, reading from the yellowed pages of the century-old book of recipes, in which were traced in brown ink, and in the quaint, tremulous handwriting of old Johann Winkler himself, the secret formulas of the "King of Bakers." Then she closed the book.

"And now, my dear, I have to show you the rest."

Paul submitted to his instructions meekly enough but nevertheless his aunt felt singularly at a loss with this strange pupil on her hands, and she had her own grave doubts as to whether the culinary genius of the Winklers really lay dormant in him at all.

On that bright, windy afternoon, aunt and nephew were closeted in the room off the kitchen, which was called the Mixing Room. It was here that the book of recipes was kept, and here that the bread and cakes were mixed, according to the time-honored tradition of secrecy. No one had the right of entry without Mrs. Lambert's permission, and that permission was never given

while she was engaged in preparing her doughs and batters. It was a cheerful little room, snug and warm, lined with the old, well polished cupboards in which the tins of spices and dried fruits and crocks of mysterious, delicious mixtures were kept safely locked. Seated at the table, was plump, rosy, beautiful Aunt Gertrude, full of the importance of her business, but a trifle uncertain of her six-foot disciple, who, shrouded in a great white apron, and with his sleeves rolled up on his muscular, brown arms, stood soberly measuring out flour and sugar with hands that looked better fitted for a lumber camp.

But little by little, as the lessons progressed, Paul became less austere; and as he unbent, Aunt Gertrude regained her natural jollity; until she actually dared to tease him.

"What a frown! You will frighten all my customers away," she said, gaily, peeping up into his swarthy face. "You must practice how to look very cheerful."

"Must I? Well, how is this?" And Paul promptly expanded his mouth into the empty grin of a comic mask. "Only I can't remember to grin while I count out spoonfuls of cinnamon. It's like trying to pat your head and rub your stomach at the same time."

"In a little while you won't have to think so hard while you are measuring your ingredients. I do it by instinct," said Aunt Gertrude, proudly. And Paul smiled at her air of naive vanity.

"Oh, *you* are a very remarkable person, Aunt Gertrude," he said gravely.

"Tut! You mustn't laugh at me, you impudent boy," said Mrs. Lambert, shaking her head, and pretending to be severe. "You must be *very* respectful." But she was tremendously pleased with herself for having discovered a vein of gaiety in her unsociable nephew. His slight smile, the first spontaneous expression she had seen on his face, was like a light thrown across his harsh, aquiline features, giving the first glimpse that anyone of the family had seen, into the gentler traits of his character; and Aunt Gertrude felt that she had been right in attributing his abrupt, ungracious manner to loneliness and depression.

"Now," she said briskly, "*I* shall finish this first batch, just to show you how it is done, and then you must do one all by yourself. How nice it is to have you to help me! You can't think how I dislike being shut up in this room for hours every day without anyone to talk to." Indeed, there was nothing that Aunt Gertrude disliked more heartily than solitude and silence. Like Jane, she adored people in general, she loved chat and gossip, she loved to hear all that was going on, and could never escape too quickly to the shop, where all day long the townspeople were running in and out, always stopping for a short chat with the lively, inquisitive merry proprietress.

"You see, now, you have to knead this dough *quite* vigorously," was her next instruction, and

turning her sleeves back from her strong, white arms, she proceeded to give a demonstration, while Paul sat by, with his elbow on the table, resting his head on one hand, and smiling at her *very* vigorous treatment of the meek, flabby dough.

"You're certainly giving that poor stuff an awful trouncing, Aunt Gertrude. Don't you think you ought to let up a bit?"

"Not at all," returned Mrs. Lambert, seriously, "I never let up, once I begin."

"What a terrible character you are, Aunt Gertrude! Here, do you want me to take a hand at it?"

"No, no," panted Aunt Gertrude. "Now don't interfere. Just *watch* me." And again she began her pummelling with redoubled energy. The exercise brought a deep flush to her smooth cheeks; a lock of brown hair barely tinged with grey kept falling over her forehead, and she kept tucking it back with the patience of absent-mindedness.

"You can't imagine how good these cakes are, my dear. They are my very favorites, though I know I shouldn't eat so many myself. I'm afraid I'm going to be a very fat old lady."

"Then we'll put you in the window as an advertisement."

Aunt Gertrude thought this a huge joke.

"But what will people think when they see you, my dear? We'll have to get you fatter, too. Then people will say, 'Do you see that fine, stout, rosy, cheerful man? Well, once he was as thin

as a poker. Winkler's Pastry gave him that lovely figure.'"

At the end of twenty minutes she had finished kneading and rolling the dough, and with a sigh of relief, turned to Paul.

"There now, you see exactly how it is done, don't you?"

But Paul did not answer. With a stub of charcoal which he had fished from his pocket, the future baker was sketching busily on the smooth round top of a flour barrel. Aunt Gertrude's mouth opened in speechless indignation.

"Tut! what are you doing?"

Paul looked up. Then, seeing Mrs. Lambert's face, he began to laugh.

"Well, you told me to watch you, Aunt Gertrude. I've been watching you. Why are you cross?"

"But is that any way to do?" demanded Mrs. Lambert, clasping her hands with a gesture of indignant reproach. "Here I've been working and working, and there you sit, you bad boy—what are you drawing?"

Here her curiosity got the better of her annoyance, and she peered over his shoulder. The hasty sketch, which had been executed with a skill that Aunt Gertrude could not fully appreciate, showed a woman with her arms in a basin of dough—Aunt Gertrude herself, in fact. In arrangement, and in the freedom and vigor of every line, the rough picture gave evidence of really exceptional talent. Aunt Gertrude tried to look like a connoisseur.

"Now, that is very clever. Where did you learn to make pictures?"

Paul shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know."

Then Aunt Gertrude, suddenly remembering the business in hand, put on a severe expression.

"That is all very well; but what have you learned to-day from me? Nothing! I have wasted my time! Oh, you are—"

"There, Aunt Gertrude,—I know all about those old cakes. Please just let me—"

"Old cakes, indeed!"

"Beautiful, wo-onderful cakes, then. Please just let me finish this, like a nice good aunt. And then, I'll tell you what—I'll finish it in colors, and I'll give it to you. You haven't any idea how lovely you are to draw, Aunt Gertrude—you're so nice and round."

Aunt Gertrude tried not to simper; she was as susceptible to flattery as a girl of sixteen, and found it impossible to resist even when she knew perfectly that she was being cozened.

"What nonsense!" But nonetheless she resumed her position at the bowl of dough again, and Paul chatted artfully, to distract her thoughts from his lesson in cooking, while he hastily completed the sketch.

From that afternoon on, there was no longer the slightest shadow of constraint between aunt and nephew. But Paul was very slow to drop his aloof curt manner with the rest of the family,

and except for Mrs. Lambert and Granny none of them had penetrated his shell.

Carl had by no means lost his dislike of his cousin, and indeed he was not entirely to blame. To begin with he inspired Paul with an uncontrollable desire to annoy him, and when he felt like it, Paul had a perfect genius for irritating people. He had found all the joints in Carl's armour, and he took a thoroughly infuriating delight in probing him in every unguarded spot. Every now and again, Carl would adopt a peculiar, affected accent in his speech, and would use very grand language; then Paul would mimic him perfectly gravely, until Carl was fairly writhing with suppressed rage. Again, Carl was rather given to boasting about himself in an indirect way, and Paul would promptly cap these little bursts of vanity with some outrageous story about *himself*, making himself out the hero of some highflown adventure, and modestly describing his own feats of strength until Carl, who could not decide whether his cousin was serious or slyly making fun of him, came at length to the opinion that Paul was the most insufferable braggart that ever lived. He was particularly vulnerable on this point, because he had, secretly, a great admiration of physical strength and courage, and Paul's superiority to him in these qualities had much to do with his dislike.

As the weeks went on, the twins were next to lose their timidity with their strange cousin. He teased them fearfully, and tweaked their yellow

pig-tails, and told them they looked like a pair of little butter balls; but on Saturday nights, while Elise read "Ivanhoe" aloud, and the family gathered around the big fireplace in the dining room, he used to make them the most wonderful paper dolls, beautifully drawn and colored, and in the greatest variety; mediæval ladies and knights, brigands, Italian and Rumanian peasants, and hosts of comic ones; until Minie and Lottie finally came to regard him as quite the most enchanting and remarkable member of the family.

Jane, however, was still neutral; she neither liked nor disliked him, and was perfectly indifferent as to whether he liked or disliked her.

And meanwhile, under Aunt Gertrude's guidance, he struggled, more manfully than successfully with the difficult art of baking cakes and bread. It cannot be said that he showed the slightest signs of the gift which Mr. Lambert believed that Johann Winkler had bequeathed to all his descendants; and so far not one of his attempts had been fit to go into the shop. His bread was as heavy as lead, his rolls were like sticks of dynamite, his cakes invariably scorched, or had too much baking soda in them.

Notwithstanding the fact that he really tried hard to learn, as much to please his aunt as for any other reason, and cheerfully rose before daylight on those wintry mornings to knead his dough, and see that the ovens were properly heated, Mr. Lambert chose to believe that his nephew was

deliberately trying *not* to be successful; and seeing in Paul's repeated failures a sly rebellion against his plans, he became more and more out of humour with the boy.

"See here, young man, how long is this business going to go on?" he demanded at length, losing patience altogether. "All of us have got to earn our own salt. I'm not a rich man, and I simply can't afford to provide for a big, strapping boy who can't even learn a simple trade—"

"'A little patience, Uncle—'" quoted Paul serenely. Mr. Lambert flushed.

"You are impudent. Patience, indeed. I have been patient. But I feel that it is high time that you proved yourself in earnest, or at least told me frankly whether you intend to make yourself of some use or not."

Paul thought for a moment, then he said slowly,

"Uncle, I *am* trying to learn this confounded business. There is no use in getting angry with me—it isn't my fault if I don't succeed. Ask Aunt Gertrude whether I've worked hard or not. But I don't want to be a burden to you—you've been very kind, and I should hate to feel that you think I'm simply sponging on you. If you aren't satisfied with me, please just say so."

"Oh, come now, my boy, there's nothing to take offense about," said Mr. Lambert hastily, changing his tactics immediately. "It merely occurred to me that *you* were not satisfied, and to urge you, if that is the case, to speak out frankly."

Paul hesitated. During the last three or four weeks he had been repeatedly on the point of coming to an understanding with his uncle, and had put it off, certain that it would not be an "understanding" at all, but simply a good old-fashioned row. There was not one chance in a hundred that Mr. Lambert could be made to understand his ideas or sympathize with them in the least, and Paul, financially, as well as in other ways, was too helpless to struggle just then. At the same time, it had occurred to him, that from one point of view, he was not acting fairly. He was ashamed of accepting Mr. Lambert's hospitality when, plainly, it was extended to him only on the condition that he conformed with Mr. Lambert's wishes, and when he had not the slightest intention of fulfilling his uncle's desires.

"It's a pretty shabby trick, and cowardly too, to live here until I get ready to do what I want, when all of them are depending on my being a fixture. It would be better to put the whole business up to uncle, and stand my ground openly. Then, if he wants to kick me out, he can."

Paul reached this decision in the pause that followed Mr. Lambert's last remark, during which his uncle eyed him narrowly.

"I see that you are deliberating," said Mr. Lambert, coldly. "Again let me urge you to be frank."

"Very well, sir. I will!" declared Paul impetuously. "I'll be telling you very little more than I told you when I first came. I can never learn to

be a baker. You can see that for yourself. And what's more, it isn't as if I hadn't tried. I don't want charity, and I thought that if for a while I could be of some help to Aunt Gertrude, it might be one way of paying for my board and lodging. And that's why—whatever you may think—I've done my best to learn how to make all this stuff. But it's no use. I never can be a baker, and *I don't want to be a baker!*"

"Ah!" said Mr. Lambert, leaning back in his chair. "I thought that was how the land lay." He was silent for a moment, and then, carefully plucking a thread from the buttonhole in his lapel, he inquired.

"And what *do* you want to be?"

"I want to be—" ("Here's where the music starts," thought Paul), "I want to be a painter."

Mr. Lambert looked as if a cannon had suddenly been discharged in his ear. For fully thirty seconds he was quite speechless; then pulling himself together, he articulated,

"A *what?*"

"A painter," Paul repeated.

"Do you mean a house-painter, or—" here Mr. Lambert raised his eyes to the ceiling as if invoking the mercy of the gods upon this benighted youth, "or an *artist?*"

"I'm afraid I mean an artist, sir."

"A person who," Mr. Lambert went through a tragic pantomime of painting in the air, "who paints *pictures?*"

"Yes," said Paul briefly.

There was a long pause while Mr. Lambert struggled to assimilate this preposterous idea. At last a tolerant, half-pitying smile spread over his features.

"My dear boy, we all have foolish notions in our youth. You will get over this nonsense. Meanwhile, be so good as never to mention it to me again." And without another word, he left the room.

"Well!" said Paul aloud, "I certainly didn't accomplish much. Where do I stand, anyhow?" Again the picture of the cross-roads rose in his mind, again the thought of the city.

"Here I am, just because I didn't have the *nerve* to make a break for the other direction," he thought bitterly, recalling his ignominious attempt at flight, "because I was afraid of being cold and hungry, and now, I'm in a worse fix than I was before." For while he cared very little about his uncle's opinions, he had grown to love his aunt, and the thought of disappointing her hopes troubled him deeply.

Well, at least his uncle knew his intentions. If he did not choose to regard them seriously, that was his own affair. Paul decided to let matters take their own course for a while.

Now, as a matter of fact, Mr. Lambert considered his nephew's declaration a great deal more seriously than he appeared to. He knew just enough about people to realize quite clearly that there was a good likelihood of Paul's *not* getting

over his absurd notions; but he was quite determined that they should be suppressed with a firm hand. He made no reference whatever to their conversation, and continued to act as if Paul's expostulation had never been uttered, but at the same time he was keenly alert to note any further symptoms that Paul still harbored his outlandish, preposterous, ridiculous, and treasonable idea.

It was not long before he discovered that these symptoms were very alarming indeed.

One Sunday afternoon early in December, he returned from a two days' trip to Allenboro to find his family gathered in the dining room, indulging in a general spirit of gaiety, which in Mr. Lambert's opinion was exceedingly out of place on the Sabbath. He was strongly persuaded in favor of the most rigid observation of Sunday, not as a day of rest, but of strenuous inactivity. All out of door games were forbidden, any books not of the most serious character were sternly prohibited, and laughter was frowned upon by the worthy old merchant, who ruled his household with a rod of iron. Furthermore, he had not accomplished all that he had wished at Allenboro, and he was in no very genial humour to begin with. What were his feelings, therefore, when, appearing in the doorway, tall and formidable in his burly overcoat, and wide-brimmed black felt hat, he discovered his family enjoying themselves in defiance of every rule of Sabbath decorum and solemnity.

The twins were popping corn over the fire,

Granny was *knitting!* while over by the window, Elise, Jane and Aunt Gertrude were grouped around Paul, all talking at once, and apparently in great excitement. What they were talking about, and exclaiming over, Mr. Lambert did not know. The window shade was run up as far as it would go, admitting the wintry twilight, and under the window, propped against the back of a chair was an object which looked like the top of a flour barrel. Paul, evidently in a most unfamiliarly happy and animated frame of mind, was talking vivaciously.

"You see, if I only had some decent colors! But it's not so bad, either. What it needs, now—" here he broke off abruptly, as Mr. Lambert, with a loud, and threatening "Ha-hum!" announced his presence.

Everyone turned around with as much consternation, as if they had been caught conspiring to rob a bank, and blank, guilty silence fell over the room.

"Ah!" said Mr. Lambert. He allowed his displeasure to show very plainly in his face, through the chilly smile with which he received his wife's timid kiss.

"Elise, will you take my coat?"

"You are cold, Peter. Do get warm, while I see about supper," said Aunt Gertrude hastily.

"But I am anxious to see what it is that interests you all so much," said Mr. Lambert, walking over to the window. Paul, with a rather defiant expression, stepped aside to allow his uncle a full view of the picture.

"You have been painting? My dear boy, you must know that I cannot allow you to indulge in such frivolous pastimes on this day of the week," said Mr. Lambert calmly. "Gertrude, I am surprised that you allowed this infringement of our rules." Poor Aunt Gertrude blushed red under this reproof, and stammered like a school-girl.

"But, Peter, I didn't know—you never said—"

Mr. Lambert checked her with a slight gesture; then adjusting his glasses, leant forward to inspect the painting, while Paul, with his hand on his hip, looked dreamily out of the window. Granny, who was rather deaf, had been very little disturbed, and went on brazenly with her knitting. Elise had hastened out to the kitchen to help her mother; but Jane, intensely interested in the proceedings, stood her ground, looking keenly from Paul's face to her father's.

"You have been painting your aunt, I see," remarked Mr. Lambert, presently. "It seems to me that an occupation more suitable to the Sabbath could have been found." He looked at the picture closely. Ignorant as he was of anything concerning the fine arts, he felt that the painting was far from being merely a school-boyish production; and, in fact, the very skill it revealed increased his determination to put an end to his nephew's efforts once and for all. He did not overlook the fact that in lieu of proper materials Paul had made a surprisingly successful use of a piece of raw wood, and a few mediocre oil paints—a rather bad sign,

in Mr. Lambert's opinion, showing as it did, a dangerous tendency to surmount difficulties. Moreover, it seemed to him that the whole thing showed a stubborn, deliberate disobedience to his orders. He was very angry, too angry to act with tact and good judgment.

Straightening up, with a flush showing on his cheekbones, he said abruptly,

"I thought I had expressed myself clearly to you before; but evidently I did not make myself understood. I cannot and I will not have you wasting your time on this tom-foolery. While you are in my house, you must obey my orders implicitly, do you understand?"

"You only told me not to—"

"Don't argue with me, sir! I will not tolerate your disrespect! Let it be enough for you that I forbid—I *forbid* your idling over this useless and childish nonsense."

Without a word, Paul began to gather together his few brushes and tubes of paint, but when he started to leave the room with his picture, Mr. Lambert stopped him peremptorily.

"Leave those things just where they were, please." Paul did as he was told.

"You'll throw them out, uncle?"

"Kindly learn to obey without asking questions!"

All that day, Jane had seen her cousin gay, full of good spirits, utterly unlike the moody, disagreeable boy that he had been for so long; but now the old, hard, obdurate expression came into his face.

"These things are mine, uncle," he said, quietly.

"Indeed? The top of that flour barrel?" inquired Mr. Lambert, pointing to the picture. Paul hesitated for a moment, and then with a slight shrug, put it down again on the chair.

"No, that is yours," he said, and walked out of the room.

Mr. Lambert took the picture, looked at it for a moment or two, as if uncertain whether it too, were guilty of some heinous crime against his rule; then, he took it; but instead of breaking it in two, placed it quite carefully behind his desk.

Paul did not appear at supper; but Mr. Lambert preferred not to notice his absence. Everyone was aware that civil war was brewing in the household, and with varying degrees of curiosity or anxiety, made their private conjectures as to what the future would develop in the way of open hostilities or amicable compromise between uncle and nephew.

It was at about half-past ten that night, that Jane, who was rarely in bed at the prescribed time, happened to remember that Elise had left "Ivanhoe" on the dining room mantel piece; she felt also, that an apple or two was just what she wanted to subdue a certain mild emptiness. The household was perfectly still, and so, taking off her slippers, she stole down-stairs in her stocking feet, to get her book, and rummage in the larder.

There was still a faint glow of firelight in the dining room.

Half-way to the kitchen door she stopped, arrested by a movement in the room, and with her heart beating violently, peered about her. Then she saw that someone was sitting in Granny's chair. For a moment, she could not move a muscle, then, mustering up her courage, she quavered,

"Who—who is that?"

The figure in the chair gave a violent start, then with a little laugh Paul's voice said,

"Is that you, Jane?"

"Oh, *Paul!*" Jane gave a great sigh of relief.

"Did I frighten you?" Paul asked, getting up.

"Well, you *startled* me," said Jane, who had always maintained that she was not afraid of ghosts or burglars—never having met a sample of either. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing," said Paul. "What are *you* doing?"

"I want some food," said Jane, succinctly. "Do you?"

"I'm not very hungry. What are you going to get?"

"Well, if there's enough wood there to fix up the fire a little, I could make some cocoa. It's awfully cold in here."

Paul picked up a stout log and flung it onto the smouldering ashes, and in a few moments, a bright flame crackled up, sending its ruddy light into every corner of the room.

Everyone is familiar with the exquisite feeling of sympathy, which food, produced at just the right moment, can excite between the most hostile

natures, and over their cups of cocoa, Jane and Paul, who had never been really hostile, began to see each other in a new light. For the first time they talked with unguarded friendliness, and gradually Paul became more confiding, and Jane listened with her usual eager interest.

At first he talked about his life with his father, his wanderings, and strange adventures, without however, the least exaggeration or the braggadoccio with which he had teased and disgusted Carl. It was not strange that Jane, who had never seen any part of the world save the few square miles of earth, bounded by the hills of Frederickstown, listened to his stories of foreign seas and foreign lands as if she were bewitched.

Never before had Paul talked to any of them about himself or his past life; loquaciousness on any subject was not one of his characteristics and concerning his own affairs he had been particularly reticent; but now it was as if he could no longer smother down all that was pent up within him. In the presence of his sympathetic listener, his words now fairly tumbled over each other, and his face grew tight and weird with earnestness and enthusiasm.

At length Jane asked him,

"You don't want to live here and take over the business after all, do you?"

"Ah, Janey, what kind of a baker would I make?" responded Paul, smiling half-sadly.

"You want to be an artist?"

"Yes. Don't think that I expected to have everything just as I wanted it. Naturally I knew that I would have to work here. I have no money. You don't imagine that I expected Uncle to plant me comfortably in some art school, and support me while I went through years of study? I planned, do you see, to work at anything that I could make enough to repay Uncle for boarding me, and to save a little so that in five or six years even, I could manage to study. I hadn't any idea of looking for help to anyone but myself, and as a matter of fact, I very nearly went on to the city to look for work instead of plumping myself on uncle. But I didn't.—I *did* happen to be 'broke,' and the city was thirty miles away, and then I hoped that uncle would advise me. I had no one else to turn to, and it seemed natural to come to him. Then, when I got here, I found that everything had been arranged for me. What I was to do was all mapped out—for my whole life—and I hadn't a word to say about it. And what was more, Uncle won't let me mention having plans of my own. And to-day—well, you were here—he forbade my even playing with paints, 'As long as I am in his house.' Don't think that I am criticizing him, Janey. No doubt he is doing exactly what he thinks is best—but what am I to do? Will you tell me that? I've been sitting here thinking and thinking, and the only answer seems to be for me to get up and go."

Jane was silent.

"Oh, I *do* understand uncle's point of view perfectly. I was awfully angry to-day, but I've tried to look at it reasonably, and I can see why it seems like rot to him. Thousands of boys of my age have crazy ideas about what they think they want to do, and thousands of them think differently as soon as they've got some sense. And Uncle thinks, I guess, that I'll do the same. If I could only *show* him how much it means to me! If I could only show him that I've got something in me besides a lot of high-falutin notions! I *have* tried to learn how to bake cakes. But I'll never learn in this world. Even Aunt Gertrude has given up on me, and she knows that I haven't loafed on the job, either. I've been pummelling dough every day at five in the morning for the last six weeks, and still not a single roll has turned out decently.

"But Uncle won't hear of my getting any other job, all because of this idiotic tradition about the Winklers. I never heard of—" he broke off and began to pace up and down the room, while Jane sat silently nibbling her thumb-nail.

"Well, what shall I do?" he demanded presently—"*You* suggest something Janey, you're a wise little worm." This sincere, if rather inelegant tribute brought a pleased smile to Jane's face. "What would you do if you were in my boots?"

Jane meditated a moment; then she said,

"Well, I wouldn't get up and go—yet. I'd wait and see."

"Wait and see what?" Paul rapped out a little

impatiently, and frowning as if this piece of advice were not exactly to his taste. But Jane was unmoved.

"I'd wait and see—lots of things. First of all, you *might* find that you don't care as much about painting pictures as you think you do." This observation surprised and angered Paul, and his face showed it. His startled, resentful look said plainly, "I thought that *you* understood me!" But Jane neither retracted nor explained. "And then," she went on, calmly, "Daddy *might* change his mind a little, if you took good care not to make him angry about unimportant things—especially about squabbling with Carl. And last of all, it's just barely possible that another Winkler *might* turn up—you never *can* tell."

Paul stared at her for fully thirty seconds in absolute silence. Then he honored these sage remarks with a contemptuous grunt.

"Well, that helps a lot I must say," he said, sarcastically. "If I waited for any one of those things to happen, I'd be pounding dough until doomsday! Thanks!" and with that he turned away and resumed his restless promenade around the room. Jane shrugged her shoulders. A rather long and chilly pause followed. Paul was disappointed in her; but his silent indignation seemed to trouble her very little, and after a while, he threw a cold glance at her. But she was sitting with her back toward him, and so he felt the need of rousing her attention in another way.

"You think, I may not care about painting as much as I think I do?"

"Maybe, maybe not. I said, *I'd* wait and see," returned Jane placidly.

"Humph. And you think Uncle might change his mind?"

"He might."

"And what chance is there of another Winkler showing up, I'd like to know? One in ten thousand!"

"It *might* be better than that." Paul sat down on the edge of the table, and glowered at the back of her head. Then gradually a slow, unwilling grin broke over his face.

"You're a nice one to preach patience!"

"Oh, I'm quite patient *sometimes.*"

"Well, look here—I'll wait and see, then. But I'll tell you one thing—if things don't begin to get different pretty soon, I'm off!"

"All right," said Jane, getting up. Paul stood up, too. Then suddenly he held out his hand.

"Listen, Janey—please don't mind me when I get rough and short. You've got more sense than I have, and I need someone to talk to like the dickens."

"*I've* got more sense than *you* have, Paul!" repeated Jane, sincerely amazed. "How can you say that? Why, you're the most—the most clever person I ever knew in my life!"

Nothing cements friendship like mutual admiration; but Jane felt something warmer and better

than mere admiration, as she put her hand into Paul's big paw; she felt that rare, happy pleasure that is stirred in a responsive young soul when it is first called upon to give sympathy and help; and their firm handclasp sealed a friendship that was to last to the end of their lives.

CHAPTER VII

GIRLS

HALF a dozen feminine tongues babbled cheerfully. For once the Deacon's chilly parlor, with its slippery, horse-hair furniture, its stiff-featured portraits, and its big, black square piano, had lost a little of its funereal aspect, and a great deal of its oppressive neatness. Over the chairs, over the Brussels carpet, over the bow-legged table were scattered pieces of bright sateen, blue, red, orange and black, scraps of lace and gold tinsel, spangles and feathers. A coal fire glowed amiably in the grate, adding a deeper color to six blooming faces, and flashing on the bright needles that were so industriously plied. Outside, the first heavy snow of the winter was falling, in big, lazy flakes, which had already covered streets and roofs, and weighted the twigs and branches of the trees.

"Well, I've got every one of my Christmas presents ready," remarked one young lady with a comfortable sigh of relief. "I start making them in June, but somehow I never get done until the *last* minute."

"I just never try to make mine," said another, "I take a day, and buy all of them in the city, when

I go to visit Cousin Mary. It saves time and trouble, and *I* think it's really more economical."

"Oh, but then they don't have the personal touch," said a third, a tall, thin anæmic-looking girl, with large, soulful eyes, and a tiny mouth. "And that is what counts. It's what makes Christmas presents mean something. I always say that I never think of the gift, but of the thought of the giver."

"But you make such clever things, Amelia," said the one who bought her Christmas presents, feeling ashamed of her lack of sentiment.

"Very simple things, Dolly," said Amelia, rinsing off her watercolor brush, and then dabbing it in a square of holly-red paint. "But I think that just a little card, with a tasteful design, and an appropriate verse is a very suitable way of expressing the spirit of Christmas."

"And quite right, my dear," boomed in Mrs. Deacon, appearing in the doorway. "But then you have such a charming gift of poesy. Not all of us are blessed with *your* magneloquence." She lifted one of Amelia's cards, and inspected it, through a pair of lorgnettes, which she held about six inches from her eyes, spreading out her little finger. "*How* charming! How effete with taste! Lily, my dear, you too should try to emulate Amelia's Christmastide mementos. You are not entirely devoid of poetic genius. Why, I have many little emblems of your youthful flights of fancy—where is that album, my dear?"

"Oh, mamma!" cried Lily, blushing crimson. "Those silly poems of mine!"

"Indeed they are not silly," said Mrs. Deacon, rummaging in the drawer of the table. "No, the album is not here. Lily, my dear, when will you remember that everything has its proper place? Now, I did want to read Amelia that delightful little Bandeau of yours on the Pine-Tree. She would be interested, I'm sure. And the Album is not here. Perhaps though, I put it away myself."

"Oh, mamma, don't get it now," begged Lily, overcome with embarrassment, adding, desperately, "Do look at the lovely thing Elise is making."

Mrs. Deacon, huge and majestic in her rustling black silk, turned her lorgnette on Elise's exquisite embroidery.

"Charming. Absolutely charming. Do not rise, my dear. Well, I see that you are all happily occupied. What are these gay colors?" she asked presently, indicating the pieces of sateen.

"Oh, I brought some things that I thought might do for costumes, Mrs. Deacon," said Annie Lee Webster. "For our party you know, on New Year's Eve."

"Ah! A Masquerade? How charming."

"What are you going as, Amelia?" asked the fourth girl, the lively, apple-cheeked Dolly Webster. The poetess looked up dreamily.

"As Sappho," she replied. Mrs. Deacon looked astonished, and interested.

"Sappho, my dear? How will you do that? Sappho was a race-horse!"

There was an irrepressible chuckle from the window embrasure, where, concealed by the long, dark-red curtains, Jane was curled, with a book, and a half-sucked orange.

Mrs. Deacon turned swiftly, her lorgnette levelled on the younger Miss Lambert like a microscope.

"Ah, Jane!" she observed a little coldly. Jane stood up respectfully, concealing her vulgar orange under her pinafore. "What are you laughing at, my dear?" asked Mrs. Deacon suspiciously.

"I thought it would be funny for Amelia to go as a race-horse," replied Jane, simply, quite at her ease under Mrs. Deacon's prolonged stare. Amelia, who took herself very seriously, and hated to appear in a ridiculous light even for a moment, said rather indignantly,

"A race-horse! Sappho was a poetess."

"Ah, of course!" said Mrs. Deacon hastily, "that will be charming. And *so* well chosen. How will you signify yourself?"

"I am going to wear a simple Grecian robe of white muslin, with laurel leaves in my hair. And I shall carry a lyre," replied Amelia. "I thought I would let my hair hang loose."

"Ravishing! Simply ravishing!" cried Mrs. Deacon in perfect raptures. "So simple. And after all, is there anything like simplicity?"

"How will you get a lyre?" asked the practical Annie Lee.

"I shall try to make one out of card-board and gold paper."

"Or you could borrow old Mr. Poindexter's banjo," suggested Jane, gravely. "That would really be better, because you *could* twang on it."

Amelia did not deign to reply to this remark.

"What are you going to wear, Lily?" Elise put in hurriedly, throwing a reproving look at Jane.

Lily glanced at her mother.

"I wish I could go as—as a Spanish dancer!" she said timidly.

"A Spanish dancer, Lily!" cried Mrs. Deacon. "Indeed I could not permit anything of the sort! No. But it seems to me that it would be very delightful if you should affect a character very similar to Amelia's. Why would it not be sweet for you to go together as the Two Muses, the one fair, the other brunette, representing, as it were, the poetical talent of Frederickstown? I would suggest, too, that each of you recite some little poem of her own composition. Lily, I must find that album." And with this, Mrs. Deacon hastened from the room.

Lily looked distressed. She was terribly shy, and the thought of having her poor little verses publicly read and appraised, dyed her smooth face, with one of her frequent blushes.

"I *would* like to go as a Spanish Dancer, though," she said, presently, biting off a thread with her little white teeth, "I don't know why, but I do. I'd like to wear a comb in my hair, and a black fan, and *scarlet heels!*"

"You'd look lovely. I'm sure if you beg hard, your mother would let you," wheedled Annie Lee. Lily shook her head.

"I don't think so. And I'm afraid mamma thinks its awfully bold of me even to think of such a thing."

"There's nothing bold about a Spanish dancer. Just dashing," said Dolly.

"But Lily isn't at all dashing," remarked Amelia.

"I want to be, though," said Lily suddenly. "I'd like to be very, very dashing just for once in my life. I want to know what it feels like. I'm sick of being demure and lady-like. Yes, I am! And I want to wear a comb in my hair and scarlet heels." The color rose in her cheeks, and her blue eyes shone with a rebellious light. "I—I want to—to *flirt!*"

"Lily!" cried Amelia, in pained astonishment, "why, whatever is the matter with you? You want to *flirt?* Why, I never heard of such a thing. You, of all people! Why, flirting is beneath you!"

"Oh, no, it's not!" returned Lily, audaciously. "Do you think it's beneath *you?*"

"Of course it's beneath Amelia," interrupted Dolly, whose brown eyes were twinkling, "Amelia's too intellectual to care about anything like that, aren't you?"

Amelia hesitated.

"I think that flirting is very trivial," she said at length, in her superior way, "and no flirt ever wins a man's solid respect. My brother-in-law says that

every man really cares more about good sense, even though he may show a passing interest in frivolous people."

"I don't care what your brother-in-law thinks," returned Lily, with a spirit that astounded her friends. *"I* feel like flirting. I'm tired of being sensible. I want to be gay, and—and *dangerous."*

"Amelia, you make me weary," said Dolly; "you pretend you aren't the least bit interested in beaux, but I know that you pose as being intellectual, just to—well, because you think it's one way of attracting 'em! And why are you going as Sappho if it isn't to show off your long hair?"

A titter of mirth greeted this observation, which struck everyone but Amelia as being remarkably astute.

"Come on, Lily—let's just see how you *would* look in a Spanish costume," coaxed Annie Lee. "We can use this yellow stuff for a skirt. Has anybody got a black lace scarf and a comb?"

"I have," said Lily, herself. "I got them about four years ago and I've had them hidden in my lowest bureau drawer ever since. I knew I never could use them, but I couldn't resist them. I—I put them on sometimes when I'm alone, just to see what I look like. Aren't I silly?"

"Go and get them," commanded Annie Lee. But at that moment, Mrs. Deacon reappeared.

"Now here is the album," she announced. "I just want to read you these few little things that

I think perfectly dear, Amelia. You with your veins of poesy will appreciate them."

"Oh, mamma, *please*," implored the hapless Lily, turning red as fire. "Don't! They are so *awful!*"

"You are so modest, Lily. Now, here is a little thing that Lily wrote when she was only fifteen, Amelia. It's called The Pinetree." And with a preparatory "Ahem!" Mrs. Deacon proceeded to read amidst a profound silence,

"The Pinetree stood lonely and bare,

"In the ghastly—no, ghostly, white light of the moon,

"And I wondered why it made me

"Feel so very full of gloom.

"It made me think of all the friends,

"Whom"—Lily, dear what is this next word?" But Lily had fled. "That child is perfectly ridiculous," said Mrs. Deacon, with annoyance. "Now, I think these little things are full of poetic feeling. So melancholy, you know. Lily was quite a melancholy child. Just look over some of these little things, Amelia, and tell me, if you don't think they are sweet. Read the one beginning,

"Alone, alone, why am I so alone?"

Just as this point the clock struck four, followed by the low chimes from the belfry of the nearby church, and Mrs. Deacon suddenly remembered that she was due at a committee meeting at four-fifteen.

Lily was persuaded to return, and the unfortunate subject of her "poesy" was tactfully aban-

doned, and now that Mrs. Deacon's overwhelming presence was withdrawn, the discussion of scarf and scarlet heels was renewed.

"We'll dress you up, anyway. And I'm sure that when she sees you Mrs. Deacon will let you have your way," said Annie Lee. "Get all your things, and *I'll* direct."

Jane, from the window embrasure, watched the proceedings with a critical eye. Of all the older girls of the town—in fact of all the girls in general,—the gentle Lily was her favorite. There was not an atom of heroine-worship in her attitude; on the contrary, she felt almost older than Lily in many ways, notwithstanding the four years difference in their ages; and she felt rather sorry for Lily, without exactly knowing why. Jane, so capable herself of getting what she wanted, had the tendency of many vigorous natures, to feel a certain good-natured, wondering contempt for weaker and timid characters; but there was something about Lily's weakness and timidity that was so perfectly in keeping with her delicately lovely face, with her daintiness and maidenliness, that it was really one of her charms, a beauty in itself.

With a sort of benevolent smile Jane observed Lily's face color with naive pleasure, as she saw her ambition to appear "dashing and dangerous" gradually being realized under Annie Lee's skillful manipulation of the very simple materials at hand.

In less than half an hour, the heavy, mahogany-framed mirror, reflected the gayest vision that had

ever peered into its mottled surface. Jane clapped her hands delightedly.

"*Now* don't you like yourself!" she crowed. Annie Lee sat back on her heels, thoroughly satisfied with her achievement. And well she might be. The vivid yellow skirt, which looked almost exactly like real satin, had been judiciously shortened to show the prettiest ankles in Frederickstown, clad in a pair of black silk stockings with scarlet clocks! —another of Lily's hidden treasures. The black lace scarf, draped like a mantilla over the high tortoise-shell comb, fell over Lily's slender white shoulders, and framing her face, made her skin seem more transparent, her hair blacker, her eyes bluer, and her mouth redder than before. Mrs. Deacon's spangled black fan had been boldly rifled from her bureau drawer, and from the humble duty of stirring the listless air in church on a summer morning, had been promoted to that of fluttering coquettishly in Lily's hand.

"If you must have scarlet heels," said Annie Lee, "you can tear the satin off the heels of your black slippers and paint the wooden part red."

"You *do* look perfectly scrumptious, Lily," said Dolly; "there isn't a thing wrong, and you've simply got to wear that costume."

Lily, with her closed fan laid against her lips, gazed into the mirror, as if uncertain that the reflection that gazed back were really she, herself.

"I wish—" she began, and then broke off with a shame-faced, confused little smile.

Just then, Jane, who happened to glance out of the window to see how deep the snow was getting, remarked,

"There goes Mr. Sheridan. I wonder what on earth—"

"Where?" cried a chorus of voices in great excitement, and instantly every girl was at the window pearing over each other's shoulders, and fairly bursting with curiosity to see the eccentric young man, whose habits had for several weeks been the subject of much speculation in that busybody little town. Even Amelia forgot her dignity and scrambled to see him. Lily, only, tried to appear indifferent, but without complete success; for after a moment's hesitation, she too was peeping out from behind the substantial Dolly.

The object of this flattering interest was sauntering along with his hands in his pockets, and his head bent; but presently, as if he felt the magnetism of all this concentrated attention, he looked up to the window. His expression of surprise,—even of indignation, as if he resented this notice from the "feminine element"—was almost instantly replaced by one of alertness. Jane beamed at him, and waved her hand, and he smiled back at her and lifted his hat; but, in that brief second—and Jane did not fail to note this—his eye travelled swiftly over the cluster of pretty faces, and with remarkable keenness, singled out Lily's, and again he lifted his hat, and bowed slightly.

Jane turned quickly to see Lily blushing pink,

and with an answering smile just fading from her eyes.

"Do *you* know him too?" she demanded. Lily pretended not to hear. Shrinking back, and pursing up her lips, she said primly,

"Aren't you all ashamed of yourselves—rushing to stare at a stranger like that, and letting him see you, too?"

"I'd like to know why I shouldn't," said Annie Lee. "Anyone who is as queer as he is, deserves to be stared at."

"What's queer about him?" cried Lily, quite indignantly.

"Well, he never goes anywhere, and never sees anyone, and lives all alone in that big house. You may not call that queer, but *I* do." returned Annie Lee.

"And he's *so* handsome," murmured Dolly, sentimentally. "I'm sure he's had some unhappy love-affair."

"Pooh!" said Jane, who was not romantic, "he's no more heart-broken than I am."

"You know very little, as yet, concerning the secret sorrows that many people hide," said Amelia.

"When they hide them that's one thing," retorted Jane, "but he advertises his like a breakfast food." Then once more she turned on Lily, remorselessly, "Do *you* know him, too, Miss Lily?" she repeated.

"I? Why, n-no," said Lily, pretending to be studying her own dimpled chin in the mirror.

"He bowed to you," insisted Jane.

"To me? Why, he didn't do anything of the sort!"

"Lily Deacon!" cried Dolly, "you know very well he did! Any why are you blushing?"

"I'm not blushing. I don't know him. How could that be? I–I only—"

"You only what?"

"Why, nothing!"

"Lily, you're concealing something!" cried Annie Lee.

"Oh, I'm not. Don't be so silly. It isn't anything at all. Only last Thursday, when I was coming home from Mrs. McTavish's I happened to take a short cut through the field there, and that hateful dog that belongs to Mr. Jenkins started to run after me, barking and growling the way he always does. I got over the stile, but he crawled under the fence, and followed me again. And I started to run, and he ran after me, and jumped up at me and frightened me to death. And Mr. Sheridan happened to be coming through the field. And he caught the dog, and told me I was a silly to run. And that's all."

"My *dear!*" breathed Dolly, "and is that all he said?"

"Oh, he just asked me if I was afraid of dogs, and I said only of some. And he said he liked them, they were so intelligent. And—and then I said I hated cats, and he said he did too; and asked me if I liked horses—"

"How long did this keep up?" inquired Annie Lee.

"There are lots of animals," said Jane. "Did you find out how he liked cows and pigs and ducks and porcupines—"

"I think you are all mean to laugh!" cried Lily indignantly. "It was perfectly natural to say *something*. And he was very nice and polite."

"And what was the dog doing meanwhile?"

"The dog? What dog? Oh—I guess it must have gone home."

"Well!" said Amelia, "I must say, Lily, that I think it would have been quite enough if you had simply thanked him, and gone on your way. And *I* think that Mr. Sheridan should hardly have asked you if you liked dogs when he had never been introduced to you."

Lily, who was easily crushed, hung her head at this reproof, and did not attempt to defend herself. Now that she thought of it in the light that Amelia's words threw on it, it seemed nothing short of shocking that she had spoken in such a familiar vein with a young man to whom she had never been introduced. Why had she said anything about it? Now, it was all spoiled, that innocent little episode, which had given her so much pleasure just to think about. Jane, however, quickly came to her defense.

"How silly! I don't think anyone but a prig would be as proper as all that."

"Jane!" remonstrated Elise, "that isn't a very nice thing to say."

"How do *you* happen to know him Janey?" asked Annie Lee.

"Oh, I called on him," replied Jane, nonchalantly.

"*Called* on him!"

"Well, I thought someone ought to see what he was like. And he was very nice. What I've been wondering is what he does with himself all the time. He says he wants solitude, and that he doesn't want to have to see any people, but I think that's all nonsense. *I* think he's bored to death with himself."

"Do you know what?" said Annie Lee, "I'm going to ask mother to invite him to our party. If he doesn't want to he doesn't have to come; but everyone else in Frederickstown *is* invited, and its all so informal and everything, I don't see why we shouldn't ask him too. It would be perfectly all right, because I think father knows him. I *know* father used to know Major Sheridan, because I've heard him talk about when they were in the Spanish American war."

This idea became popular immediately. Even Amelia had no objections to make, and was in fact already making certain mental improvements on the costume she had planned.

But Lily was silent. Amelia's criticism of her behavior had wounded her to the quick, and with a sober face she began quietly to take off her finery, as if some of the fascination had evaporated from that dashing Spanish comb, and even from the thought of scarlet heels.

CHAPTER VIII

JANE LENDS A HAND

Mr. Sheridan, like Achilles, had been sulking for a remarkably long time. It is true that some men and women are able to nurse a grievance for life; but Mr. Sheridan was too young, and too healthy not to find himself, at the end of some eight weeks, thoroughly bored, restless and dissatisfied with himself. He was not ready to admit this yet, however. He believed that he had proved conclusively that it was in every way the wisest thing to withdraw in lofty disgust from the arena of human affairs, and while his present course of life had the charm of novelty, he was unwilling to admit that he was possibly mistaken. For a time he rather enjoyed the rôle of the misanthrope, and cynic. But it was not his natural character, by any means, and notwithstanding the fact that he *believed* that he did not want to have anything to do with anyone, he found his new rôle exceedingly tiresome to play day in and day out without an audience. Peterson, who was as bored as he, and who could not understand "what had gotten into Mr. Tim," was sour and unsympathetic; and finding the need of someone as confident, absolutely imperative, the

embittered recluse of five-and-twenty, resorted to writing long letters to his one-time boon companion, Philip Blackstone, in which he poured forth his uncomplimentary opinions of human nature, gave lengthy descriptions of his states of mind, and accounts of his mode of living. Phil, a hearty young man, who loved horses and dogs, who was quite helpless without his friends, and hated writing letters, responded tersely enough, inquiring what was the matter with him anyway. The correspondence died out. Mr. Sheridan tried to devote himself to books, but the long, unbroken hours of silence in the musty old library depressed him terribly. He took long walks, and long rides for exercise, but his own thoughts were dull company. He rode through the woods and the idle, untilled fields of his own estate, and was struck by the contrast between his own barren, unkempt lands with the thriving farms of his neighbors. It occurred to him to go in for farming in the spring, to plant corn and wheat, and to get cows and horses, to build barns and paddocks, and to rent out part of his land to some of the thrifty, shrewd young farmers, the newly married ones. The idea delighted him; he wanted to talk about it, to get the opinions of some of the intelligent land-owners of the neighborhood, and to air his own notions. But gradually his enthusiasm waned again. He was getting lazy and listless. Every effort seemed useless to him. He began to feel very much abused because no one was interested in him. Miss Abbott had treated him

very badly, even Peterson was as cross with him as the old servant's good manners would allow, Phil scolded him in his short dry letters, and finally had stopped writing altogether, and that bright little red-headed girl had never come to see him again. When he walked through the town he felt abused because everyone seemed to be having a better time than he. They all knew each other; the women stopped to chat on their way to market, the men talked local politics and business in the doorways of the warehouses; when he passed they touched their hats respectfully, and stared after him curiously, as if he were something that had dropped from another planet. He was in a chronically bad humor. That the world in general had taken him at his word, and left him entirely alone put him still more at odds with it, and the fact that he knew he was living idly and uselessly put him at odds with himself. If he had stopped to consider, he would have discovered very quickly that he was not heart-broken as he imagined at all; he was simply angry. He tried to excuse himself for his aimless existence by arguing that no one cared what he did, and that it was impossible for a man to keep up his enthusiasm about anything when there was no one to please but himself. He told himself that everything was the fault of the heartless Miss Abbott; but as a matter of fact if he thought a great deal about Miss Abbott's unkind treatment, he thought surprisingly little about Miss Abbott herself. He was quite shocked one day to

discover how blurred her very features had become in his memory. A lot of fair, curly hair—which somehow changed to smooth black tresses when he tried to represent it in his fancy—a rosy, coquettish face, and the arch, self-confident smile of a girl who had begun to learn when she was less than sixteen that she was beautiful and irresistible. But all the features of that pretty, imperious face were indistinct, and when he tried to picture it very clearly, he found to his dismay and amazement that he wasn't thinking of *that* face at all. Another one had replaced it, a shy, demure little face, the features of which were very distinct indeed, so distinct that he could not doubt for a moment to whom it belonged. This was rather an alarming discovery to be made by a young man who had definitely decided that all women were henceforth to be indignantly and strictly avoided. And it was with dismay that he found himself repeatedly thinking about a certain brief accidental conversation that he had had with the timid, black-haired maiden in the field.

"Dogs are so intelligent,"—and then they had spoken of the relative intelligence of cats. Not a very brilliant conversation, certainly, and it piqued him a little to think that he had not been able to say something more interesting and original; yet the girl had listened as intently as if every word he had uttered was a mine of wisdom.

On the other hand, it was certainly quite possible that *all* girls were not as treacherous as the beautiful Miss Abbott. Here he pulled himself up short, and

displeased at his own weakness, firmly resolved not to waste another thought on Lily. It was all the fault of that little red-headed Jane, who had popped in on his solitude, and roused his interest in Lily Deacon by flattering his vanity.

One morning, early in Christmas week, Peterson brought him a note. Mrs. Webster had couched her invitation in the ceremonious, courtly style of her generation, reminding him of the friendship that had existed between her husband and his uncle, and expressing her hope that he would give them the pleasure of his company on New Year's Eve.

After the gloomiest Christmas that he had ever spent in his life, Mr. Sheridan's determination to avoid human society wavered feebly under this hospitable attack; and after five or ten minutes reflection, this hardened misanthropist sat down, and accepted Mrs. Webster's invitation in a tone that fairly overflowed with gratitude.

On New Year's Eve there was a full moon, a huge, silver-white disk that flooded the whole sky with light, riding high above the happy, festive little town. New fallen snow glistened on the roofs, lined the black branches of the trees, and flew up in a sparkling mist from the swift runners of the sleighs.

All Frederickstown was bound for the Webster's big farm. The streets were filled with the sounds of laughter, shouts, jovial singing, and the jingling of sleigh-bells. One horse sleighs and two horse sleighs, old ones with the straw coming through the

worn felt covering of the seats, and new ones shining with red paint and polished brass, all were crowded with holiday-makers. All the younger people, and even many of the older ones were in masquerade, under their burly overcoats and mufflers, and vast entertainment was derived from trying to guess who was who, as one sleigh passed another, the occupants waving and shouting. And it was amusing to see that of the older people, it was usually the most serious and sedate who wore the most comic disguises, and the most grotesque masks; evidently bent upon showing for once in the year that they too had not forgotten how to frolic. There was old Mr. Pyncheon, with green pantaloons appearing from beneath his great bearskin coat, and a huge red false nose hiding his own thin, impressive eagle's beak; there was grave, bearded Professor Dodge with red Mephistophelean tights on his lean nobby limbs, spryly tucking Miss Clementina into his little single-seated sleigh. (Miss Clementina, aged fifty-two, was representing "Spring," in pink tartalan with yards of green cotton vine leaves, and bunches of pink cotton roses garlanding her spare, bony little figure, though at present this delightfully symbolical costume was hidden under piles of cosy-jackets, mufflers, veils and cloaks.) And lastly, there was Mr. Lambert himself, representing a mediæval astrologer, with a black sateen robe ornamented with silver-paper stars and crescents, a long white beard held in place with black tape, and a great pointed cap nearly a yard high. The entire

Lambert family, by no means excluding either Granny or the twins was packed into the big three-seated sleigh. Mr. Lambert mounted in front, with Aunt Gertrude beside him, and Minie between them, snapped his whip in a positively dashing fashion, and off lumbered the two fat old horses. Sledges flew out from the side lanes, joining the lively procession, and of course there were races and near accidents, and once indeed the Todd's sleigh overturned into a big drift depositing most of its occupants head downwards into the snow.

"There's Miss Lily, right in front of us!" cried Jane, "and I do believe that she's wearing her Spanish costume after all!"

The Deacons, mother and daughter, were in fact being driven along by old Mr. Buchanan, who had gallantly placed its sleigh at the service of the two ladies. At the same time, to judge from Mrs. Deacon's face, there seemed to be some reason for uneasiness in the chesterfieldian old man's very zeal. He was an ardent, if not an exactly comfortable driver; he shouted to his horses and the two lean, shaggy animals alternately stopped short, and leapt forward with terrific suddenness and speed; and at each jolt, Mrs. Deacon groaned in suppressed alarm. She had begun to suspect that her escort had already been celebrating the coming New Year, and, indeed, it was not unlikely; for the poor old bachelor was as noted for his convivial temperament as for his gallantry.

"Pray, Mr. Buchanan, would it not be as well to

drive less rapidly?" suggested Mrs. Deacon, as casually as she could. But Mr. Buchanan would not hear of this; he felt that she hinted at a veiled doubt as to his ability for managing his fiery steeds.

"Have no fears, ma'am. You may place entire confidence in me, ma'am. I may seem reckless—and there's dash of the old Harry in my nature, I won't deny—but there ain't a man in Frederickstown, I may say in the whole *county,* ma'am, as understands this team of horses like me. Why I was drivin' this here Jerry and Tom afore you was born, Miss—er—ma'am;—it's the living truth. Why, they are like my own children—they love me, and I l-o-ove them, like they was my own brothers!" And the tenderness of his emotion so wrought upon Mr. Buchanan's spirit, that large tears stood in his childish blue eyes. It cannot be said that even these assurances calmed Mrs. Deacon's fears; but if to her that five mile drive was a thing of sudden alarms and constant terrors, to Lily it was an unmixed delight. It was not often that Lily was able to take part in the various merry-makings of the town; there always seemed to be so many other things for her to do, and she was far oftener spending her hours in company with her mother's serious-minded friends than with the lively boys and girls of her own age. She attended innumerable meetings of the Ladies' Civic Uplift Society, she made innumerable red flannel petticoats with feather-stitched hems for little heathen girls, she prepared innumerable sandwiches for various parish entertainments, she made

innumerable calls on fretful invalids; but she did not very often find a chance to have simply a good time.

Now, snuggling down into a corner of the rickety old sleigh, with the musty moth-eaten old bearskin robe pulled up to her chin, she sat lost in complete rapture. The fresh, cold air, stinging her cheeks, the brilliant moon, the sweetly dissonant jingling of the sleigh-bells, and the scraps of singing carrying back from the jolly groups ahead of her, the wide, free stretches of snow-covered fields, glistening under moonlight so bright that one could detect a rabbit track across their smooth expanse—all filled her with unutterable delight. She was very glad that she hadn't gone with any of the others; then she would have had to talk, and she wasn't ready to talk yet. It was too nice just to be able to sit still, and enjoy it all, and think. Her thoughts must have been pleasant ones. Pleasant? That is not the word, but then there is no word that can describe the timid, bold, incoherent, romantic and beautifully absurd thoughts of an eighteen-year old girl. It is enough to say that her shining eyes were filled with them, that the dimples came, and that when she smiled to herself, she bent her head so that no one would be able to see that smile, and perhaps read its meaning.

Mrs. Deacon had been persuaded to permit the Spanish costume, and under her scarfs and furs, Lily was very dashing indeed, with the high comb, and the clocked stockings, the spangled fan, and the scarlet heels. And she pictured herself naïvely

as the belle of the ball; yes, all the young men should besiege her—but she didn't care about that in itself. What she longed for was to appear fascinating and irresistible, just so that—well, just so that, *he* could see. Dolly had told her that he would be there. Would he recognize her? Would he dance with her? Well, it might be this way; he would see her of course, but she would pretend not to see him, and he would think that she had forgotten all about him. Then perhaps he might ask someone to present him, but still she would pretend to have forgotten all about that day in the field; then he would ask her to dance with him; but already someone would have claimed that dance. Then—what if he did not ask her again? Suppose he should just bow, and go away. There was a possibility.

"What a silly girl I am!" thought Lily, unconsciously shaking her head. Just then she was flung violently to one side, her mother half tumbling upon her. At breakneck speed, and with a great flourish of his whip, Mr. Buchanan had just negotiated the abrupt and difficult turn into the gate of the Webster's farm.

Once past the gate, a long and rather narrow road descended gradually between two snake-fences to the hollow where the big, rambling, comfortable old homestead stood. The road leading from the house to the barn was illuminated with colored lanterns, which threw weird tints over the faces of the masqueraders as they sped past.

Already a dozen sleighs had emptied on the

wooden platform in front of the big sliding doors; already the huge room, with its high ceiling crossed by solid rafters, was half full of people. It was gaily decorated. Ropes of cedar entwined the rafters, branches of holly were tacked to the walls, colored lanterns, with sly sprays of mistletoe hanging from them, dangled from the ceiling. A huge fire blazed in a great brick fireplace, in front of which the older men had collected to drink a toast with Mr. Webster. And up in the erstwhile hayloft, which now did duty as a sort of musicians' gallery, a negro band was already playing "Old Uncle Ned," with such irresistible liveliness that many dancers had begun to spin about the floor without having paused to take off their heavy wraps.

For a New Year's party at the Websters to be anything but jolly,—superlatively merry—was an unheard of thing. Indeed it could not have been otherwise. Theirs was quite the merriest family in the world. To see the four big boys, with their irresistible grins, and the two rosy-cheeked bright-eyed girls, and Mrs. Webster, a dignified-looking woman, with a pair of twinkling eyes, and a lively tongue, and old Mr. Webster, rotund and ruddy, was sufficient to dispose the most melancholy soul in the world to jocund mirth.

Around the fire the old wags were cracking jokes and recounting their favorite anecdotes. Then the darkies, grinning from ear to ear, and showing rows of teeth like ears of corn, struck up a Virginia Reel.

"Ah-ha!" cried Mr. Webster. "Choose your partners, gentlemen!" and dashing across the room, he singled out Janey.

"Here's my girl!" and executing the most wonderful bow imaginable, he led "his girl" out onto the floor. The Virginia reel went on at a lively pace, and Mr. Webster, leading with the laughing and muddled Jane, introduced the most remarkable figures, turning the dance into a sort of pot-pourri of all the steps he had learned in his youth, including a cake-walk and a sailor's horn-pipe. Everyone seemed to want to dance and no one seemed to have any difficulty in finding a partner; but the two undisputed belles of the evening were Lily Deacon and—Miss Clementina! Yes, Miss Clementina, little and wizened and brown as a walnut proved beyond argument her right to boast of having been once the queen of hearts in Frederickstown; and although thirty years and more had passed since her cheeks were rosy, and her sharp little elbows had had dimples in them, she still had her faithful admirers, grey-haired, portly gentlemen, a trifle stiff, and a trifle gouty, who still saw in the wiry, black-eyed little old maid, the charmer of auld lang syne. And how outrageously she coquetted, and how everyone applauded when she and the professor danced a schottische together—most gracefully; the professor spinning about, on his red legs, pointing his toes, skipping and sliding in the lively dance with all the sprightliness of a stripling of twenty; and Miss Clementina pirouetting and skipping along beside

him, her pink tartalan skirts swirling around her tiny little feet, and her black eyes sparkling in her brown little face, as if saying, "Who says that *my* day is over!"

But Lily held sway over the youth of the gathering. Every moment she was dancing, light and tireless, as if there were wings on her scarlet heels. But now and then she lost the thread of what her partner was saying, and her blue eyes strayed shyly toward the door. Then suddenly, the bright red color flushed up into her cheeks.

In front of the fire, with a glass of cider in his hand, and talking to Mr. Webster (who was at last forced to confess himself "a bit winded") stood Mr. Sheridan.

He seemed quite content to stand there listening to his host's reminiscences of his uncle and the times they had had together; and to talk about the various features of country life as compared to life in the city; and to laugh at the droll yarns of the other old gentlemen; and to watch the multi-colored swarm of dancers spinning about to the lively rhythms of the negro music. But as a matter of fact, Mr. Sheridan had, in a remarkably short time singled out one slim figure, and followed it through the kaleidoscopic motion of the crowd.

"Well, sir, I hope you have decided to settle down here for good," said Mr. Webster, heartily.

"I—I haven't exactly decided. But I shall probably be here for some time."

"You have a fine old place there. You don't

happen to be thinking of getting rid of any of that land of yours?"

"It all depends," replied Mr. Sheridan vaguely.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Webster suddenly bethinking himself of his duties. "I'm nearly forgetting that you're not an old fellow like myself."

And the hospitable old soul took his guest by the arm and dragged him off to be presented to the young ladies.

First, Mr. Sheridan danced a lively two-step with the plump but agile Dolly. He enjoyed it, and he enjoyed talking to Dolly, and he enjoyed the music.

Then Dolly, with a wicked twinkle in her eye, said,

"I want to introduce you to one of my dearest friends." A hopeful, eager expression came into Mr. Sheridan's face, until Dolly, greatly enjoying his disappointment (which he hastily concealed under a pleasant smile) betrayed him into the hands of a pallid young lady, wearing a wilted-looking Grecian robe, and a wreath of laurel leaves in her long, scanty, mouse-coloured hair. It was Amelia, the poetess.

These proceedings aroused great interest in a quarter to which none of the guests had given a thought: namely, in the hayloft, or musicians' gallery. Here since the early part of the evening, Paul had ensconced himself, his long legs dangling over the edge, his chin between his hands, brooding above the jolly turmoil of the dance floor like a large, thoughtful crow; and here several of the

younger folk had joined him, disdaining the flighty amusements of their elders, and greatly preferring to spend their time in the more solid enjoyment of devouring nuts and raisins and oranges.

Jane was the latest addition to this noble company. Having ascended the wooden ladder, she slid along the edge of the loft to Paul's side.

"Hullo," she said.

"Hullo," responded Paul, "been having a good time?"

"Yes. What are you doing?"

"Watching."

"It's nice up here. It's near the music. You know, I'd like to learn how to play the bassoon," said Jane.

"Then you probably will. How would the trombone suit you? That seems more your style."

Jane turned up her nose at him, and then without replying focussed her attention on the dancers below.

Suddenly, half laughing and half annoyed she exclaimed,

"Oh, that *is* too mean of Dolly!"

"What's too mean?"

"Why—oh, she is a wicked-hearted girl!—she *knows,* just as well as I do that the main reason Mr. Sheridan came was so that he might meet Lily Deacon. And she's gone and tied him up with Mealy Amelia!"

"Huh?" said Paul.

"He'll be with Amelia until the dance is *over!*"

"Is that your friend, Sheridan, down there? He's sort of a nice-looking fellow," remarked Paul, condescendingly. "I thought he was about ninety. Seems a bit glum, doesn't he?"

"Well, you'd be, too, if you had Amelia talking about the infinite with you for a whole evening. I saw Dolly introduce him to her at least half an hour ago, and he hasn't been rescued yet. Dolly did that on purpose—just to tease me!"

"To tease you? Humph, you seem to think yourself a pretty important person don't you?" observed Paul with a grin.

"Well, I asked Dolly myself please to introduce him to Miss Lily as soon as she could. I *told* her he was very sad, and needed cheering up—and just see what she's done!"

"I must say you aren't very easy on Amelia. You usually seem to like everyone. What's the matter with her?"

"I *do* like nearly everyone, but I *do not* like Amelia. She's a—a hyprocrite," said Jane. "She's a *fake*. That's what I don't like about her. I don't like people who write about the stars, and then turn around and say mean, nasty, cattish little things just because they're jealous. Oh, *poor* Mr. Sheridan!"

The object of Jane's ardent sympathy really deserved it. He was doing his duty manfully and gallantly; but every now and then a haunted and desperate expression came into his face, as he summoned up all his faculties to respond to Amelia's discourse.

She was trying, by various subtle, melancholy little observations to make him feel that she understood that he was not a happy man, and that he might confide in her. His only escape from this harassing conversation was to dance with her (tripping at every second step on her Grecian draperies) and—his only escape from the disasters of the dance was to talk to her.

"Paul!" said Jane in a tone of decision, "something must be done."

"Eh?"

"I'll tell you what. *You* must go down, and ask Amelia to dance with you!"

"WHAT!"

"Yes. Now, do an unselfish act, and it shall be returned to you a thousandfold," said Jane, unctuously.

"Not interested in any such bargains," returned Paul.

"Yes. Now, Paul, don't be stubborn. It'll only be for a minute. I'll ask mother to get Daddy to go and rescue you—or Mr. Webster, or Mr. Buchanan."

"Can't. Thank heaven, I don't know how to dance anything but a highland fling."

"Well, teach Amelia how to do that. Come on, now, Paul—like a good, delicious angel." And with that she began to tug at his arm.

"Jane, you're going to be a horrible, horrible old woman. You're going to be a matchmaker. You're going to make all your friends hide in am-

bush when they see you coming, and you'll probably be assassinated."

"I don't care. Come along, now—ni-ice little Paul, and teach Amelia how to do the pretty highland fling!" And actually, so irresistible was her determination, she coaxed the enraged Paul down the ladder, and standing disinterestedly at a certain distance away, heard him say meekly, according to her instructions,

"Miss Hartshorn, may I have the pleasure of this waltz?" his voice fading away to an anguished whisper. Mr. Sheridan, beaming with satisfaction, professed abysmal regrets at being forced to lose his charming partner; and then Paul, with the sweetly wan expression of an early martyr, placed one arm around Amelia's waist, and began the peculiar, grave capering which in his dazed condition, he believed to be a waltz.

CHAPTER IX

"THE BEST LAID PLANS—"

MR. SHERIDAN, turning about, suppressing a vast sigh, beheld Jane, standing and smiling at him with her most benevolent expression.

"Why—so there you are again! How glad I am to see you! Why haven't you ever come to call on me? I've missed you," he said, taking her hand. His pleasure was too sincere not to be extremely flattering.

"I *would* have come, only I've been pretty busy," she explained; then her eyes twinkled. "That was Paul," she said. "You remember I told you that he was coming. Isn't he a nice boy?"

It was only the mischievous sparkle in her eyes that told Mr. Sheridan that she had a double meaning.

"A *charming* boy!" he declared with fervor; and then he laughed guiltily.

"That was mean of Dolly," said Jane.

"What was mean?"

"To tie you up with Amelia Hartshorn."

"Why, on the contrary, I—I thought Miss Hartshorn very agreeable," replied Mr. Sheridan, fibbing like a gentleman.

Jane shrugged her shoulders.

"I was afraid that Dolly might have forgotten that you were a stranger, and leave you with one partner for the rest of the dance. And then you'd have been bored, and—and would have wanted solitude worse than ever."

This remark brought first a puzzled expression and then a burst of half-shamefaced amusement from Mr. Sheridan.

"You evidently remember our conversation very clearly," he remarked.

"Oh, yes, I do. I've thought about it quite often—that is, about some of the things you said."

"And I must add that you seem to take great interest in your friends."

"I suppose," replied Jane with a sigh, "that *you* think I'm an awful busybody, too. Well, if I am I can't help it. I mean well."

Mr. Sheridan chuckled again. He had never before met any youngster who amused him quite as much as Jane did.

"Was it because you brought some pressure to bear on—er—Paul that he interrupted my dance with Miss Hartshorn?"

"Yes," answered Jane absently.

"You seem to find it easy to make people do what you want."

"No, not really—not at all. I had an awful time with Paul." Then after a short pause, she added, "I'm awfully glad you came to-night. It seems to have cheered you up."

"Why do you think I needed cheering up?"

"Because you were so gloomy."

With a smile Mr. Sheridan changed the topic by suggesting that he get some refreshments, and to this proposition Jane assented enthusiastically.

"Do you remember that Miss Lily I told you about?" she inquired casually, when she had finished her ice. "There she is."

"The very pretty young lady in the Spanish costume?"

"Yes. She's horribly pretty, isn't she? Would you like to dance with her?"

"Very much. Only I haven't had the pleasure——"

"Oh, *I'll* introduce you to her, if you like," interrupted Jane, putting her plate on the window sill.

Mr. Sheridan raised his head, and looked at Jane with a touch of wariness. But her face was innocence itself, utterly disarming in its childlike simplicity.

Enormously amused, he gravely followed her across the room, to where Lily was sitting, chatting gaily to the two Webster boys; and Jane sedately performed the ceremony of introduction. Then, well-satisfied with her accomplishment, and feeling that she could do no more at present for these two, she retired to her eyrie in the hayloft, entirely forgetful of the unhappy Paul.

It is just possible that, as, out of the corner of her eyes she saw Mr. Sheridan approaching, Lily

pretended to be enjoying the conversation of the Webster boys a little more than she really was. She felt the color burning in her cheeks, and was angry with herself.

"He'll think I'm just a—a silly village girl," she thought. Her natural shyness was greatly increased by the presence of this young man with his indescribable air of self-confidence; he was not at all like the two simple hearty, countrified Webster boys. There was something about him that marked him unmistakably as a product of city life, of ease, and rather varied worldly experience, and for some reason this made her a little bit afraid of him; or, perhaps afraid of herself. Usually the least self-conscious person in the world, she now found herself filled with misgivings about herself. She was afraid that there were numberless shortcomings about her of which she was unaware, but which he would not fail to notice; and this thought stung her pride. Furthermore, she was a trifle piqued at his attentiveness to Amelia, though not for worlds would she have admitted that any such silly vanity existed in her. Added to all this, was the sting that Amelia had left in her sensitive mind. Perhaps he had thought it undignified of her to have chatted with him so informally that day in the field—and then he had seen her peeping at him from the window.

All these doubts excited in her a desire to snub him a little. He was *not* to think her just a "silly village girl." Perhaps her gay, dashing costume

made her feel unlike herself, and gave her some of the self-confidence that she lacked by nature. Indeed, the pretty senorita was altogether quite a different person, from the simple, artless girl that Timothy Sheridan remembered so vividly. He was himself a thoroughly simple young man, and he was puzzled by the change in her.

Fluttering her fan nervously, she chatted with him, asked him questions, laughed,—all with a little air of frivolity, and carelessness. She felt a sort of resentment toward him, and this lead her once or twice to make a remark designed "to take him down off the high horse" that she imagined (on no grounds whatever) that he had mounted. His expression of bewilderment and polite surprise gave her a satisfaction that was not unmixed with regret and displeasure at herself. At length, when the music started up again, he asked her to dance. By this time, his manner had grown a little cold and formal, and Lily was piqued. So, with a little shake of her head, she told him that she had promised this one to Mr. Webster. There was something in her slight hesitation before she answered that made him feel that this was not quite true; and, hurt and puzzled, he bowed, expressed his regret, and the hope that he might have the pleasure later, and withdrew. On the whole, Jane's diplomacy had been anything but successful.

Mr. Sheridan slipped out to smoke a cigar in the fresh, cold air, and to meditate on the irritating vagaries of the feminine gender. Lily's reception

had hurt him more than he liked to admit even to himself.

"What was the matter with her? She wasn't a bit like that before—she seemed so gentle and unspoiled and kind. Hang it, there's no way of understanding what a girl really is like, anyhow. I've just been an idiot."

After a moment or two, he told himself fiercely, "Well, if she doesn't want to dance with me, I certainly shan't bother her."

A little later, he threw away his cigar, and went in again. But he did not dance. He sat and talked pleasantly to Mrs. Webster for twenty minutes or so, and then joined his host by the fire, with whom he discussed agriculture and politics for the rest of the evening.

In the meantime, Paul, deserted by Jane, had managed to extricate himself from the toils of the fair Amelia, and possessed by a deep sense of injury, had climbed up again to the hayloft, with the double purpose of expressing his indignant feelings to Jane, and getting well out of the reach of his recent partner.

"Well, I must say—if that's the way you keep a bargain—" he began. Jane looked around at him with an abstracted expression, and then unable to control herself at the sight of his aggrieved face, burst into the most unsympathetic laughter.

"Oh, you poor creature! I *am* sorry! I forgot all about you!"

"Do you think you're giving me fresh informa-

tion?" inquired Paul, in tones of bitterest sarcasm.

"How *did* you get away?"

"Much you care!"

"There, don't be angry. Tell me how you *did* get away?"

"If you must know—I just bolted."

"Paul!"

"Couldn't help it. Just had to. Sorry if it was uncouth and all that—but there are limits to human endurance!"

"Now who's hard on Amelia?"

Paul grinned unwillingly.

"I guess you were about right. The whole time I was with her, she was picking on things about people—all the other girls who were the least bit pretty. Not plain, straight-forward out-and-out wallops, mind you, but all sorts of sweet and sly—"

"Oh, I know her way. And did you just up and leave her?"

"No. We pranced around a while, and then she sat down, and made me fan her. And then we pranced around some more—until I thought I was going to die, and she kept talking—first about what she thought about girls nowadays, and then about poetry—you can imagine about how much I had to say to that sort of stuff. And then we pranced around some more, and by that time I'd concluded that I had only myself to rely on"—this with renewed bitterness, "so I told the woman that I had a—a weak heart, and guessed I'd better get a little air—"

"Paul, you didn't!" cried Jane, horrified.

"Yes, I did," said Paul, grimly. "I'd gotten to the point where I'd have flopped down, and played dead if necessary. She seemed to swallow the story, bait, line and hook, and was quite sympathetic —and here I am, and the next time you try to get me into a fix like that—!"

"I say," interrupted Jane, "Mr. Sheridan hasn't danced with Lily at all! He's gone and plopped himself down with all those old fogies around the fire!"

At this Paul took his turn to chuckle.

"Serves you right! *Now* will you keep your fingers out of other people's pies? I told you you were too young to be meddling with such things. But I guess you're just like all women—jump at conclusions, and then start trying to run things—"

"You think you're awfully clever, don't you?" retorted Jane acidly.

"Not clever—just humanly intelligent. Intuition may be all right for women, but plain horse-sense is good enough for me."

"What's intuition?" demanded Jane.

"The thing that makes girls think they know more than men do," replied Paul, scornfully. "Your friend Amelia says she's got a lot of it. Ask her what it is." Then he turned to her with an exasperating grin; he was getting immeasurable satisfaction out of her discomfiture. "Practice what you preach, old lady. I guess it's about

time that *you* left a thing or two to Providence."

Jane felt that it was time to change the subject.

"People are queer," she remarked.

"I've heard that before," said Paul, rubbing his nose, "I've observed it, and I know it."

"I think you're sort of detestable to-night."

"It's your fault, then. I think you've ruined my disposition for life. The next thing you'll be trying to make me be sweet to that fat old dowager with the moustaches!"

"*Hush,* Paul! That's Mrs. Deacon."

"Nobody could hear me in all this noise. She seems in an awful stew about something, doesn't she?"

Jane did not answer. Paul stared at her.

"What's the matter with you? You look as if you were going to have a fit." Still Jane did not answer. There was indeed a frozen look on her face.

"Well," said Paul, eyeing her, "what have you been up to now?"

"N-nothing," said Jane.

"That won't go with me, old salt. What have you done to that poor, defenseless old widow?"

"I—I'm afraid I've made rather a mess," Jane confessed, faintly.

"Oh, I'm quite sure of that. And you won't catch me coming to the rescue again. Here I am and here I stay until I go home under Uncle Peter's sheltering wing. Well, what have you done?"

"I—I didn't mean—"

"Of course not. Your kind never do. They'll have a revolution in this town, if they keep you here until you've grown up—which I doubt very much." Then, seeing that she was really distressed, he patted her hand, and said, consolingly, "There, tell your Aunt Rebecca what you've done—I'll help you out, if I must."

"No one can help me," said Jane, darkly.

"Is it murder this time? Well, tell me anyhow. I'm always prepared for the worst with you."

"Don't tease, Paul. I sent her sleigh away," said Jane, with the calm of deep trouble.

"You—*what?*"

"I said—I sent Mrs. Deacon's sleigh away."

There was a pause, during which Paul made every effort to guess what earthly designs Jane had had in perpetrating such a peculiar deed. Then he gave up.

"You have something against Mrs. Deacon?" he suggested, delicately. "You don't like her moustaches, perhaps? Or perhaps you think that a five mile walk would be good for her health?"

Jane was not listening.

"I—you see, I thought it would be nice if Mr. Sheridan took Lily home. And a little while ago I was talking to Mr. Buchanan who brought the Deacons here. He was sitting outside, and he seemed awfully tired and sleepy, and kept saying that late hours were bad for young and old; and then I said that—that the Deacons weren't going back with him. And he didn't wait a minute. He

just got into his sleigh, and went off like Santa Claus. And now, it looks as if Mr. Sheridan and Lily were mad at each other—and if Mrs. Deacon finds out that *I* told Mr. Buchanan to go—I don't know *what* to do!"

"Well!" said Paul, "I suppose you're about the *coolest*—rascal I ever met in my life. I don't think I've ever even heard of anyone like you."

"What shall I do?"

"Do? Why, to be perfectly consistent with your kind, after having gotten everything into a sweet kettle-of-fish, just wash your hands of it. Leave it to Providence—and hike for the tall timber." Then he began to chuckle, hugging himself, and shaking up and down, in a rapture of mirth.

"Oh, don't bother about it. They'll get home all right—"

"I'm not bothering about that. I'm thinking about what'll happen if Mrs. Deacon finds out that I sent Mr. Buchanan away."

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. She hasn't found out yet."

"I wonder why Mr. Sheridan and Lily are mad at each other." Then she jumped up.

"What are you going to do now?" demanded Paul.

"I'm going down."

"Take my advice and stay where you are." But Jane was already on her way down the ladder.

The party was beginning to break up. The wild tooting of horns, the shrill notes of whistles, and

showers of confetti announced the New Year. Jane made her way through the tangles of colored streamers, and the knots of merry-makers toward the huge chimney-place where a group of older people were standing, watching the picturesque scene.

"Ah-ha, here's my girl again!" cried Mr. Webster. "Come here and watch the fun with your old god-father."

With his big hands on her shoulders, Jane leant against him, and looked on as placidly as if there were not a care in the world troubling her peace of mind. When the noise had subsided a little, she looked round and up at Mr. Webster's face, and raising her voice a little so that it was impossible for Mr. Sheridan not to hear what she said, remarked,

"Mr. Buchanan has gone home, and left the Deacons here."

"What? What is that?" said Mr. Webster hastily. Jane repeated her remark, glancing furtively at Mr. Sheridan, whose face had suddenly grown rather red. But he stared straight ahead and pretended not to have heard her.

"Ah, well, Sam can hitch up our sleigh in a moment," said Mr. Webster. "I daresay he'll be only too glad to take Lily home." And he chuckled slyly.

For some reason, Mr. Sheridan was able to hear *this* remark quite distinctly. He looked around, and after a momentary hesitation said,

"There is no reason for that. Mrs. Deacon and her daughter are near neighbors of mine, and I—I'd be delighted to take them home." And without

giving his host a chance to argue the point, strode off hastily in the direction of the majestic dowager.

By this time the old lady, undergoing the process of being wrapped up in a dense cocoon of furs and mantles, while the two Webster boys clamored for the pleasure of putting on her carriage boots, was quite besieged by young men begging to be allowed to drive her home. Lily stood behind her chair, smiling, but a little tired-looking.

Mr. Sheridan worked his way deftly and determinedly through the group.

"Will you let me drive you home, Mrs. Deacon?" He did not look at Lily, and Lily dropped her eyes.

"*I* am taking Miss--Mrs. Deacon home," said Sam Webster firmly, unconsciously grasping that dignified lady's plump foot more tightly, as if he intended to hold her by it, should she attempt to evade him.

Now Mr. Sheridan *did* look at Lily. Would she or would she not prefer to go with him?

"Why, if Mr. Sheridan has—has room for us, we needn't trouble Sam, mamma," said Lily, demurely. "That is—"

"It's no trouble," interrupted Sam,—which was quite true—"and I've got the sleigh already hitched up"—which was not true. He sent an almost belligerent glance at Mr. Sheridan, who ignored it.

Mr. Sheridan felt extraordinarily jubilant. Nothing should prevent his taking Lily home—not if he had to slaughter this mob of impertinent young men in cold blood.

Then Mrs. Deacon, extricating her foot from Sam's convulsive grip, rose up. There was a warm light in her eye, the peculiar, benevolent beam which enlivens the glance of the far-sighted mamma as it rests upon an eligible young man.

"Mr. Sheridan, I thank you. I accept your pusillanimous offer," she said, in the full, bell-like tone of a public official. "Samuel, we shall not emburden you."

In vain did Sam assure her that he would be only too happy, that there was nothing he would like to do more; meanwhile sending at Lily reproachful looks fit to melt a heart of stone. Lily simply did not see them. In cool triumph, Mr. Sheridan escorted the two ladies to his sleigh.

An hour later,—it was after one o'clock—he entered his library, where Peterson had kept the fire burning, threw off his coat, and sat down to try to work out the puzzle of Lily's conduct. On the way home, they had exchanged hardly six words. But if Lily had been silent, the same could not be said for her mamma. Even now he seemed to hear the incessant, rich tones of Mrs. Deacon's voice ringing in his ear, as they say the booming of the sea echoes in certain shells. He could not remember whether he had ever answered her or not. But Lily? It seemed evident to him that she had not wanted to talk with him or to dance with him during the party. It seemed equally evident that she *had* wanted to drive home in his sleigh. Now what was the meaning of behavior like that?

By two o'clock he had come to the conclusion that she was a coquette, that he was a donkey, and that the best thing he could do was to tell Peterson to pack up and be ready to pull up their stakes the day after to-morrow. He had been acting like an awful fool anyway. He was twenty-five years old; too old to be acting like a schoolboy. How in the world had Mary Abbott been able to—

By three o'clock he had come to another conclusion. He wasn't going to go away at all. He'd be hanged if he'd be chased around the earth by *women*. He was going to stay where he was. He was going to go in for farming. He liked the quaint old town, he liked the solid, intelligent, industrious, practical people. He liked Mr. Webster for instance, and Mrs. Webster, and Dolly, and old Mr. Pyncheon, and he quite loved that little Janey Lambert, and he liked—well, already the list had grown to a fairly respectable length for a confirmed misanthrope.

At half past six, Peterson coming into the library to see that everything was in order, discovered his master sleeping placidly in the huge armchair, surrounded by, almost buried under books, pamphlets and almanacs which had never been taken down from their shelves since the late Major had been a young and hopeful devotee of farming. He picked one up, and holding it at arm's length read the title, "Fertilizers and Fertilization." The old man drew a deep, long-suffering sigh.

"Lord, it was bad enough before," he thought

despondently, looking down at Mr. Tim, and shaking his head slowly. "It can't be that he's goin' in to be a useful citizen. Whatever would the Major say to that?"

Then he suddenly remembered the old Major's invariable reply to such propositions. Quite undisturbed, and in the most astounding French, he used to say, "Searchez le Femme."

CHAPTER X

PAUL AND CARL

PAUL, in his heavy canvas apron, his sleeves rolled up, flour in his hair, on his eyelashes, and on the end of his nose, sat on a three-legged stool in front of the door of the big oven. There was an expression of such dogged concentration on his face, such fierce intensity in the grim frown between his eyebrows, that one might have thought he was expecting to draw forth a new universe, remodelled nearer to his heart's desire, from the roasting bake-oven. The event he was anticipating was indeed of great moment not only to him but to at least four other members of the household who had gathered in the kitchen—Aunt Gertrude, Jane, Elise, and ruddy little Anna, the bouncing little assistant cook and shop-keeper, who never could watch Paul's culinary struggles without going into a fit of giggling.

"It's been in twenty minutes," announced Jane, glancing at the clock. Paul raised his head and glowered at her.

"Can you or can you not hold your tongue?"

"I can not," answered Jane, frankly.

"Who's making this cake?"

"Come, Janey, leave Paul alone and don't bother him," said Elise. "Come over here and let me try this sleeve to see if it fits." Elise was engaged in making over one of her mother's gowns into a school-dress for Jane. Jane obediently stood through the process of a fitting, but craning around to keep her eye on Paul.

Suddenly, taking hold of the hot handle of the oven-door with his apron, he flung it open; and reaching in, pulled forth the huge cake pan.

"There! Now, Aunt Gertrude, come and look at this fellow! How's *that* for a blooming success?" His face simply beamed with pride as a chorus of "Oh's" and "Ah's" greeted his first real triumph. Five big disks of cake, delicately, perfectly browned, light as a feather, he turned out onto the wooden board.

"Beautiful!" cried Aunt Gertrude. "I've never made a better one myself, have I Elise? No, not even your grandfather could make that cake more perfectly."

Paul swelled out his broad chest.

"Now I am a Baker!" he announced. *I'm* the boss around here, and I think I'll begin by firing —Jane!"

Jane, delighted and quite as triumphant as he, made a spring for him, and flinging both arms around his waist hugged him ecstatically, shouting,

"I knew you could do it! *I* said you could!"

Paul tweaked her nose.

"I suppose you'll be saying *you* made that cake,

next. You couldn't learn to bake an article like that in a life time. Unhand me, woman, I've got to fix the frosting."

His satisfaction sprang from a deeper source than that of the mere success. Some people might think it quite a trivial matter to make a good cake, but Paul, during weeks of abject failure, had come to consider that it required superhuman powers. It must be remembered of course, that Winkler's cakes were not like any others, and that into the mixing and baking of those delectable goodies there had to go a skill and care that not many people could give. Repeated failure had made Paul moody; he had even begun to think that his lack of success was attributable to some deep-rooted weakness in himself. He had, in fact, begun to give it quite an important significance; and, in his earnestness, had even gone to the length of making a curious pact with himself. He had determined not to touch a pencil, not even to open the precious box of paints that Jane had given him, until he had learned to make cakes and bread that should be an honor to the venerable traditions of his family. Moreover, considerable reflection had convinced him that Jane had been right in advising him to try to win his uncle's good will; and he had not liked to have Mr. Lambert believe that he was deliberately trying *not* to make good.

Jane understood very well the real cause of his satisfaction; and she was as pleased as if he had accomplished a Herculean task.

That night Mr. Lambert expressed his satisfaction in Paul's final success. He was a very just man, and he did not fail to commend his nephew for his patience.

"I am glad to see, my boy, that you have taken a reasonable view of your situation; and have so fully realized your peculiar responsibilities."

Thereafter he began to treat Paul with a marked difference of manner; he consulted him quite as often as he consulted Carl, discussed domestic and public business with him, entrusted important errands to him, and, in a word, no longer treated him as if he were an eccentric and willful child.

Within the three months that had passed since Paul had come to live with his relatives his position had changed astonishingly. At the beginning of February he found himself looked up to by the "women-folk" as if he were a prime minister. He suggested, and was allowed to carry into effect several important changes in the simple business system of the Bakery; and customers with special requests were now referred to the big boy, who handled their concerns and their temperaments with perfect tact and good sense.

But if Paul seemed at last to have given in to his uncle's wishes, he was in truth no more reconciled to the lot which destiny had flung in his way than before. He simply kept his own counsel.

On the other hand two things had contributed to teach patience to the impetuous boy, who never in his life before had known anything like restraint.

At first he had consoled himself for his repeated defeats in the simple matter of cake-baking by the thought that he was designed for more impressive things. But the impressive things were not ready to be done yet, and he was being measured by his failure in that which *was* at hand. And so it came about that he put all his will to the simple, woman's task, until he had mastered it. In the process, he had come, also, to take a more personal interest in the family affairs; and no longer to think of himself as an outsider, to whom the interests of his kindly relatives were matters of total indifference. He was proud, too, to bear the name of one of the first inhabitants of Frederickstown. It made him feel that he had some share in the little community; he was no longer a boy "without a country," as he had told his farmer acquaintance. He knew everyone; and he was more or less interested in their various affairs. Once, after he had been listening to some of the older men discussing, in his uncle's warehouse, a question which had arisen concerning the matter of running the state highway through the town, or turning it off from one of the outlying roads, he had said laughingly to Jane that he was getting a mild attack of "civic interest"; and then after a moment's thought, he had added more seriously, "But it's true. I've gotten pretty fond of this place. I almost feel as if I belong to it, and it belongs to me. I'd like to make it proud of me some day. It's all very nice and fine to say that you're an independent citizen, and don't hail from

anywhere in particular, but you *do* feel lonely and left-out, and there are lots of things you never can understand. Lots of things," he repeated, with more emphasis. "I've seen dozens of fellows knocking around the world, coming from nowhere in particular, and going nowhere in particular. Some of 'em were pretty clever, I guess—I'd hear 'em talking, sometimes on board ship, sometimes around the tables in the taverns. I used to listen to them—they talked as if they knew a lot, and were usually worked up over something,—Americans, and Italians and down-and-out Englishmen. Lord, how they used to shout and argue and pound their fists. But, now that I think of it, all they said was nothing much but a lot of noise. They were like sea-weed floating around without its roots sticking anywhere. They sounded awfully fiery and patriotic, but I don't think they honestly cared much about any place under the sun, or about any *thing*. And that's a bad way to be. It would be better, I think, to spend all your days in one place and to love that place, even if you got kind of narrowed down—than to belong nowhere." These grave views surprised Jane, and perhaps she did not wholly understand Paul's meaning. He was older than she, and was beginning to think like a man, and sometimes she could not quite follow his thoughts. But she hoped that he meant that he would find it possible to work out his own ambitions without going away. Sometimes she wondered—he spoke so little now about his plans—whether he

had given them up altogether; and this she did not like to believe. But Jane, inquisitive as she was, could hold her peace very patiently when she felt that it was better so.

In the second place, Paul had become very conscious of his almost total lack of education. He could read, and write, and figure well enough to cast up the accounts with accuracy; but beyond these elements he knew nothing save what he had gleaned from his rough contact with the world. His ignorance of many things which even the twins had learned, sometimes startled even Jane; and Carl had never left off making sly fun of him for counting on his fingers like a kindergarten child when he had to calculate a simple problem in multiplication.

At first he had pretended to scorn his cousin's book-learning, but little by little he found himself envying Carl's extensive knowledge, which that youth was rather overfond of airing. Every generation of Winklers had seen to it that the young ones acquired a sound, simple, thorough education; and among them poor Uncle Franz had stood out as the "dunce."

There was something quite pathetic in the sight of the big boy sitting on those winter evenings, listening to the twins lisp out their next day's lessons to Elise, and storing away as well as he could the simple things he heard; and many times, he sat up until after midnight, over the ashes of the fire, poring over an old "Elementary History of the United States," humbly beginning where Janey had long

since finished; and stumbling over words that even Lottie could spell easily.

In the midst of these occupations, Paul spent little time in dwelling upon plans for departure. He seemed content to bide his time, if necessary, for an indefinite period; and had settled into a state of peace and amity toward all the world, with one and only one exception.

That exception was Carl. Just where the rub came between the two boys it would be hard to say; but hard as he tried to hold his temper in check, Paul found it impossible either to hit it off with Carl, or to discover the root of his cousin's grudge against him; and it often seemed to him that Carl deliberately tried to rouse the old Adam in him. Every day Carl's disposition became more acid, and as the spring progressed he became positively intolerable. Paul had put up with his ill-humors as well as he could, partly because, during the latter part of the winter, Carl, who was the least sturdy of his cousins had not been very well. He suffered frequently from severe headaches, and his constant studying, which he doubled as the spring examinations approached, certainly did not improve either his health or his disposition. Aunt Gertrude was worried about him, and tried to coax him to spend more of his time out of doors, for by the end of March the snow had melted away from the hills, the sun was growing warmer, and the trees already turning green with buds opening in the genial warmth of an early southern spring. He resisted

these gentle efforts, however, and even when the long Easter holiday came, settled down to a process of cramming, utterly indifferent to the delicious weather. Even his father had one or two slight difficulties with him, so uncertain was his temper, and the other members of his family treated him with kid gloves, but with Paul he squabbled almost continually. Now Paul had mislaid some of his papers; now he had left the stopper off the ink-well, now he had put his shoes where he couldn't find them. More than once it occurred to Paul that Carl was actually trying to goad him into leaving. "But what on earth have I ever done to the idiot?" he wondered. That Carl was jealous of him never dawned on his mind; and yet it was the case. Carl was jealous of the position his cousin had taken in the household; he was jealous of his physical strength; he was even jealous of the self-control with which Paul curbed his anything but mild temper, under his continual nagging.

One day, flying into a rage over some trivial matter, Carl informed him that the trouble with him was "his confounded swell-head." By this time, Paul had reached the end of his tether; he retaliated, with a sudden thrust that went home to Carl's most vulnerable spot.

"What's the matter with you, anyway?" he demanded whirling upon his cousin. There was a black frown on his face; and suddenly losing his temper altogether, he seized Carl's shoulder fiercely. "I'm sick of your eternal whining, and snarling.

You snap at me at every chance you get,—but nothing on earth would make you fight like a—a man! Would it? Hey?"

Carl wrenched himself out of his grip, and backed toward the door, trembling with fury.

"You've a swell-head," he repeated, stubbornly, his eyes flashing, "and you're a—don't you dare to touch me! I hate you! You're a bully—that's what you are!"

"A bully! It's you that's the bully. You know darn well that *you're* safe in nagging the life out of me—you're pretty sure that I wouldn't hurt a little fellow like you. You're a little coward, Carl Lambert, but I tell you now that if you don't stop your eternal whining, I'll—I'll—"

"You'll what?" sneered Carl.

"I'll thrash you until you can't stand up. Do you understand me?" And once more Paul's big hand clamped down on his shoulder. Carl's face went white, and a look of such utter terror superseded the one of rage, that Paul was astonished.

"What on earth is the matter with you?" he repeated, in a milder tone. "Will you tell me what I've ever done to you?"

"I hate you! I've hated you ever since you came here! Thrash me if you want to! Nothing will ever make me hate you any worse than I do now!"

Paul frowning more in bewilderment than anger stared into his cousin's pale, distorted face. Then suddenly he asked,

"If you hate me so much, why didn't *you* tell

Uncle Peter about my playing billiards—for money—with Jeff Roberts?"

Carl did not answer.

"I can't make you out," went on Paul, as if he were talking to himself. "You bother the life out of me, you squabble and row from morning to night, and you never say *what* you're down on me for. I honestly believe that until recently you had a lot to do with Uncle Peter's bad opinion of me, and yet—somehow, I *don't* believe you hate me as much as you think you do. If *you* had told Uncle Peter about that business with Jeff Roberts he would certainly—not certainly, perhaps, but very likely—have sent me packing, and you would have been rid of me, and yet you didn't do it. And it wasn't as if you weren't a tell-tale, because you are. And what under the sun makes you say I've got a swell-head?"

"It's the truth," repeated Carl, doggedly, and not another word would he say. There was nothing to do but to leave him alone; but the strain of putting up with his sullen silence—which he maintained for a full week—wore on Paul's patience, until more than once he was on the point of declaring his definite intention to put up with it no longer. It was at the end of that week—the last in a warm, summery April—that matters changed suddenly, bringing the first trouble that Paul had yet had to share with his kinsfolk.

One warm Saturday afternoon, when it was May in everything but name, Jane revelling in the last

days of the spring vacation proposed a long walk into the country. The twins, Paul, and Elise approved heartily.

"And try to coax Carl out, too, Lisa," said Aunt Gertrude, who wanted to stay at home to do some mending while she took charge of the shop. "He doesn't take any exercise at all these days."

At first Carl growled, and said he wished they'd leave him alone, but just as Elise had given up trying to persuade him, he suddenly changed his mind; though still grumbling as if they were making him do something against his will, joined the jolly little party. But it cannot be said that he was a particularly lively member of it. He looked pale and sulky, walked by himself, and with a moody expression kept his eyes on Jane and Paul as if their high spirits, their perfect camaraderie angered him. And in fact, not the least of his grievances against Paul was Jane's affection for him; for cold and selfish as Carl might be, he loved Jane in his own way, and in addition, he hated not to be the chief object of interest. Besides, he was feeling half ill again.

"Shall we ask Lily to come with us?" suggested Elise, as they reached the top of Sheridan Lane.

"Let's ask everyone we meet," said Jane, "everybody! Nobody ought to stay cooped up indoors today. Poor Lily—she's practising again."

And in fact Lily's voice, a little listless and monotonous to-day came sweetly through the quiet air; there did not seem to be much joy in Schubert's beautiful little spring song as she sang it—"And

winking Mary-buds begin, to ope their golden eyes—" she broke off in the middle of the second part.

"Lily!"

A moment later she appeared at the window.

"Come along! You've got to come along with us!"

"Where are you going?"

"A-maying."

"But it isn't May," said Lily trying to sound merry. Nevertheless, in another minute she was with them, swinging her straw hat on her arm. On down the lane they went, under the light shade of the budding trees, past the old iron fountain.

"Whoa. Where are you off to?" shouted the voice of some invisible being; there was a scrambling, scraping sound in the branches of a tree that, growing inside of the wall around the Sheridan place, extended its patriarchal boughs across the road; and presently the lord of the manor, hot, and red, with a three foot saw in his hand swung gracefully into view.

"Are you going to have a party without *me?*" he asked in an injured tone. "Can't I come, too?"

"There!" said Jane in a low tone, giving Paul a surreptitious pinch, "what did I tell you?"

"Are you going to begin meddling with that again?" demanded Paul, also in a low tone, remembering bitterly the unhappy part he had been called upon to play at the Webster's party. "Because if so, I'm going home."

"I'll meddle if I think it's necessary," returned Jane, calmly, "but I don't believe it will be."

And, indeed, from the first it seemed quite plain that her valuable services were not required. With the air of one who feels that her small tasks have been well done, she watched Lily and Mr. Sheridan who wandered on ahead, leading the way across the old wooden bridge, and up the hill.

Jane said frankly to Paul that she would "sort of like to hear what they were talking about," but Paul was pained, and undertook to lecture her on the spot for her deplorable habits.

On each side of the road lay the broad fields, where, in the furrows of dark earth, freshly ploughed, young corn was already thrusting upwards its vivid green blades.

"How do you like my scare-crow?" Mr. Sheridan called back, waving gaily toward the grotesque figure which bore an absurd resemblance to Peterson. "I made Peterson dress him up in his winter suit. Isn't he a fine, impressive fellow, though. How do you think he'd strike you if you were a crow?" Then without waiting for an answer, he went on talking to Lily, describing all his late activities in the line of agriculture, his plans for new buildings on his land, and airing, boyishly all his newly acquired—and perhaps not entirely assimilated—knowledge of farming. Jane might have found this talk distinctly disappointing, but to Lily everything that he said seemed remarkable.

"And then, perhaps, you are going to live here—

a good deal of the time?" she asked timidly. "I am very glad that you have found so much to interest you."

Mr. Sheridan turned to help her over a stile. For some reason, her words, so simply said, and without the slightest tinge of coquetry, seemed to disconcert him.

"I—yes. I—have grown very much attached to Frederickstown—and farming is interesting because—because—" But for the life of him he could not think of any reason *why*.

The little party trailed across the field, all walking together now, laughing and talking. Only Carl hung behind. To begin with, he was not yet on speaking terms with Paul, and he was piqued at Jane, and the sunlight made his over-strained eyes ache, and he was thoroughly tired out already. Lily was walking arm in arm with Elise, and both were talking to Mr. Sheridan, the twins were running ahead, trying to catch the yellow butterflies that they frightened away from the early field-flowers; and Paul and Jane strolled along side by side sometimes joining in the talk of the others, sometimes discussing their own affairs. But at last Jane turned around, and noticing for the first time how Carl was lagging, called to him.

"Why don't you come and walk with us, Carl?"

"I'm all right as I am, amn't I?" he returned. Jane shrugged her shoulders.

"What's the matter with him?" she asked Paul. "Have you had another quarrel?"

"Not since Monday,—haven't had a chance. He won't speak to me. I don't know what's the matter with him," Paul shook his head. "I *have* tried to get along with him, but I can't seem to work it. He says he hates me, and that he's always hated me —and maybe its true, though I don't see why. I mean that I've never given him any cause that I know of. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. I seem to make him downright unhappy—he acts as if I had slipped into his shoes, and I've never taken anything he wanted, have I?" and after a short pause, he added, "And I'm sure that I don't want anything he has. It seems to get worse with him all the time. Perhaps, Janey, his feelings may be hurt because you and I get along so well. Maybe I'd feel the same way if I were your brother, and he were a 'swell-head' cousin from nowhere. After a bit, why don't you drop back with him?"

"Why should he hate you?" wondered Jane. "I could understand if you were really—"

"What?"

"If you were like what you *seemed* to be like the first night you were here," she said frankly. "*I* didn't like you then either. I didn't like you for quite a long time. I didn't like you until you said that you were going away."

"Maybe Carl would like me better if I told him that," said Paul, laughing, but with a rather sad expression in his eyes. "And I've been thinking lately—"

"What?" asked Jane, quickly, looking up into his face.

"I've been thinking that I—perhaps I ought to, Janey."

"No, no, no, *no!* Not yet, Paul! You said, just the other day—and what a silly little thing to make so much of. Lots of *brothers* squabble and call each other names—"

"But it doesn't make a particularly happy household, does it? I don't want to go, Janey—not yet. I don't want to go until—it's a hard thing to explain exactly, but this is the way it is. When I first came, I was thinking only of one thing—father was gone, and I didn't care for anyone in the world, and I didn't want to. I wanted to work by myself and for myself, in the way that seemed most to my liking—and when I found that Uncle had other plans for me, and intended to force me into them, it made me furious—and what was worse was the thought that I had to do either as Uncle wanted or—well, *starve*, if I was out of luck. And I was afraid of starving, being an ordinary human being. I started to run away the first night I was here—Carls knows that—and I didn't because I was afraid to. He knows that, too. And so I stayed on, planning to make a break as soon as I could. And I hated everything—I was perfectly miserable—until that night, do you remember, when we had that talk by the fire. After that, I began to look at things differently. It seemed to me that I'd been acting like a donkey, and so I decided to do as you said—make the best

of things as I found them, and see what would happen. And now—I don't know how it is—but you've all been so good to me, and it makes a difference not to be all alone. Now, when I think of the fine things I may do some day, I think of how you all may be proud of me, and how—perhaps—maybe Frederickstown would be proud of—all that seems silly, doesn't it—but anyway that's the reason why I'd hate to go away now—why I'd hate to go away with any hard feeling behind me. That is, unless it simply *had* to be. Men *have* lived alone, and worked and done great things with no one to care whether they lived or died—and I could do it, too. But, over and above cake-baking—" he laughed, as if a little ashamed of his own seriousness, "I've learned that—I've learned that it is a better thing not to be all alone."

Jane made no reply, and presently Paul went on, "I daresay I made myself pretty disagreeable at first, and I don't wonder that Carl hated me then—but I *have* tried to be decent to him, and to make him like me. If he doesn't, it certainly isn't his fault—it can't be helped. Only, I haven't any right—I mean, if he's going to be miserable while I'm around, if I get on his nerves every minute—it isn't as if we were little kids, we'll soon be men, and two men quarrelling with each other in one family can make an awful mess of things. You were all happy together before I came." As he said this he looked down gravely into the round, sober little face beside him. "Don't you see, Janey?"

Janey did not answer; but a little later as they all turned into the cool shade of the woods, she dropped back until she was walking near Carl. She had too much instinctive wisdom to seem to do so deliberately, and she did not talk to him until the twins started to hunt for violets and jacks-in-the-pulpit, when she began to remind him of the places they had explored the summer before, and the grotto they had found the summer before that until he began to feel as if he were receiving the attention which was his brotherly due.

The beautiful afternoon wore on happily. For a long time they all sat talking and laughing under the trees, sorting the white and purple violets that they had picked. Once or twice Tim Sheridan thought of what Phil Blackstone and Johnny Everett and Mary and all the rest of them would say to his bucolic pleasures, and grinned at the thought of the expressions they would wear; and he wondered himself at his own enjoyment in the company of these simple young people—but he was having a better time than he had ever had in his life, and even Peterson was beginning to show some interest in his eccentric master's latest occupations.

And for a time, Carl, too, joined in the chatter, as poor little Janey, inwardly saddened by what Paul had told her so simply, tried to coax him out of his sullen humor.

When, at length they all started homeward, he even linked his arm through hers. Now, she thought, was the time to ask him what was the root

of his ill-feeling against Paul, now was the time to tell him what Paul had said—she hated so for people to be unhappy for no reason, or for silly reasons.

"Carl, listen," she began, "I want to—" but he suddenly interrupted her.

"Look here, Jane—I don't know what's the matter with me. But I—I feel like the dickens."

She did not quite understand him.

"What about?" she asked.

"What about? About nothing—my head aches like all get-out, and every now and then everything gets to jiggling in front of my eyes." She looked at him in alarm, and saw that his face was terribly pale.

"Carl! You mean you're ill? Let me—oh, what's the matter?"

"For heaven's sake, don't kick up a fuss now. No, don't tell Elise," he said, impatiently. "I'll get home all right. And don't scare mother to death when we get there. I guess it's the sun or something. And—don't walk so fast."

Jane, more frightened by the look of his face, than by his words, obediently slackened her pace. The others were eight or ten yards ahead of them.

"Hurry up, Janey—we'll be late for supper," called Elise, glancing back at them. Jane looked pleadingly at Carl.

"I *have* to tell Elise. Please, Carl, dear, don't be foolish."

"No, you must *not*. I tell you I won't have them all fussing over me, and talking, and asking questions!" he exclaimed, with a sudden flash of temper. "Let 'em go ahead if they want to."

They dropped farther and farther behind, until the others were already crossing the bridge as they were just gaining the road. But Paul, strolling along with his hands in his pockets whistling an accompaniment to his own thoughts was midway between the two divisions of the party.

Suddenly Carl declared that he had to rest until his head stopped throbbing a bit. Just then Paul happened to glance back.

"Hey! Are you going to spend the summer back there?" he shouted, cheerfully, but the next moment he seemed to guess that something was wrong, for after a little hesitation, he turned and started to walk toward them.

"We're coming," said Jane, "only Carl has a little headache, and he wanted to rest a minute."

Paul looked critically at his cousin's white face. He did not waste any time in asking the well-meant questions that Carl found so objectionable, but said simply,

"I guess you'd better let me help you, Carl."

To Jane's surprise there was no hostility in her brother's eyes.

"I won't have *them* make a fuss over me, do you hear," he said in a dull voice. Paul glanced at Jane.

"You cut along with the others, Janey. There's

a short cut through this field. Carl and I'll go this way."

"Good idea," mattered Carl. "Guess we'll—try that, Jane." And with an effort, he got to his feet.

"Take my arm," said Paul.

Jane watched them as they started across the field, and then obediently ran at full speed to catch up with the laughing, chattering group ahead.

As for the two sworn enemies, they made their way slowly along the little, meandering footpath, that cut through the field, Carl leaning more and more heavily on Paul's sturdy arm, frankly, if silently grateful for its solid support. They said nothing, and Paul, who realized more than Jane had that Carl was seriously ill, wore a grave expression. He was thinking, not of the many bitter words that Carl had showered on him, but of the angry threat he himself had uttered, and the memory of it made him wince.

"We've only a little way to go, now, cousin," he said gently. "Would you like me to give you a lift?"

Carl, quite exhausted by now only looked at his cousin incredulously.

"*You* couldn't carry me," he said, thickly, and then drawing a long breath, he added, "but I wish to goodness you *could!*"

Paul smiled.

"I guess you aren't much heavier than a keg of olives," and with that, he lifted Carl quite easily in his arms, and set off at a quicker stride across the field.

An hour later poor Carl was far past caring whether "they" made a fuss over him or not. But indeed the worst part of it was that there was very little fuss made at all. His room was so quiet that the chirping of the birds in the budding trees outside his window, the sound of voices in the street below could all be heard distinctly, and yet Aunt Gertrude and Mr. Lambert sat beside his bed, and Janey was there, clinging to her father's hand, and Paul sat half hidden in the little window embrasure, staring out soberly at the fading sky. The shock and suddenness of it all had stunned the little family.

It was only Mr. Lambert's face that Paul could see clearly in the dusk of the room, and the transformation it had undergone since the old man realized the danger of his only son, left an indelible memory on the boy's mind. All its pompousness had fled—it looked old and helpless and humble. And apart as he was, Paul, looking upon their fear and sorrow, felt that he was being welded to his own people. All his own desires seemed at that moment, small and selfish, and with a thrill of pity, he vowed silently that if the need came, he was ready to lay aside his own hopes forever, without regret, and be their son.

CHAPTER XI

CARL SQUARES HIS DEBT

It was not until the nineteenth of May that the burly, grey-haired little doctor could say definitely that Carl would get well. And even then he could not entirely dissolve the cloud that hung over the family. Carl's eyes which had always been weak and near-sighted had been gravely injured by incessant overstraining, and the doctor said frankly enough that unless he took the greatest care of them there was a strong possibility of his losing his sight.

"No books, Mrs. Lambert. Nothing but rest," he said, firmly. "Later, he must be out of doors. Plenty of exercise, plenty of sleep, and no study for at least a year."

This program, so entirely opposed to all Carl's tastes was not imparted to him until he was well on the road to recovery. He listened to it stoically, propped up among Aunt Gertrude's downiest feather pillows, in the dark bedroom, a green shade almost bandaging his eyes, and hiding half of his thin white face.

"Does the old boy think there's a likelihood of my being blind anyway?" he inquired, using the

blunt word without a tremor. No one answered him. His face turned a shade paler as he turned helplessly from one side to the other trying to guess where his mother and father were standing. Mr. Lambert attempted to say something, but all he could do was to take his son's groping hand in his.

"Well—that's all right, father. I guess I'll go to sleep now," said Carl, after a short pause. "There's no good kicking up a fuss about that yet." And drawing his hand away he lay down quietly, turning his face to the wall. He was quite still, until, thinking that he was asleep, his father and mother left the room noiselessly, Mr. Lambert with his arm around his wife's shoulders.

Then, wide-awake, Carl almost savagely worked himself up on his pillows, and sat alone, thinking.

He wondered what time it was. He did not know whether it was morning or afternoon. That it was day and not night he could guess from the busy rumbling of wagons on the street, and the soft chattering of the twins' voices in the little garden below. Then he heard the solemn, monotonous tones of the old church clock.

"Just noon-day," he thought. "The twins have been home all morning, so school must have closed. And it must be fair, or they wouldn't be playing in the garden."

At that moment he heard careful, tiptoeing footsteps outside his door. He had already become quick at recognizing the tread of different members

of the family, and without the least uncertainty he called out,

"Paul!"

Then he heard the door open.

"I thought you were asleep," said Paul's voice.

"Well, I'm not." Then in a jocose tone, Carl said, "It's a beautiful day, isn't it?"

"Why, yes," answered Paul, in some surprise. "Look here—have you been taking off that bandage?"

"No. But it *is* a beautiful day isn't it? I just wanted to be sure I guessed right."

Paul said nothing. To him there was something indescribably terrible and touching in Carl's cheerfulness, and in the sight of that half-hidden face turned nearly but not exactly in his direction.

"*You* heard what the doctor said," said Carl abruptly, "there's a chance that I may be blind, isn't there? Come on, and tell me. You certainly can't keep me from knowing sooner or later. *Did* he say that?"

"Yes. He did," Paul replied briefly. Carl seemed to think this over quite calmly for a moment or two; then with a dignity that he had never shown before, he said slowly,

"You once said I was a coward, cousin. And you were right. I *am* a coward in the way you big fellows think of it. But maybe I'm not a coward in *every* way. Maybe I'm not. I don't know. Maybe I am."

Paul said nothing, but stood helplessly with his hands on the back of the chair.

"Sit down—that is, if you want to," Carl suggested rather awkwardly. "It isn't time for your lunch yet, is it? Where's Janey?"

"She's helping Elise." Paul sat down, crossed his legs and looked at his cousin, not knowing exactly what else to say. He looked odd enough sitting there, in his apron, his sleeves rolled up and his shirt open at the neck, sunburnt and strong in contrast to the bony, pallid boy in the bed.

Carl fingered his eyeshade wistfully.

"Lord, I wish I could take this confounded thing off for just a minute," he muttered moving his head restlessly. "Do *you* believe what the doctor says?"

"I believe you'll be all right in six months," said Paul. Carl sat bolt upright.

"*Do* you think so? Do you really. You aren't saying that just to cheer me up? No, *you* wouldn't do that, would you?"

"No," said Paul, "I wouldn't."

"Do you think I'll be able to go back to school next year?"

"No," said Paul, "I don't."

"You don't?" Then Carl laughed. "Well, I'm glad you say what you think."

"It's very likely, though, that you'll be able to study a little, and a fellow as clever as you are won't be behind long," went on Paul, gravely. Carl was vastly pleased at the compliment.

"What makes you think I'm—clever?" he asked presently.

"Why, you *are*," answered Paul in a surprised tone, and then with a rather sad little laugh, he added, "I wish I knew one tenth—one *hundredth* as much as you do. I'm a dunce, I don't know as much as Lottie does—not nearly."

In the face of this humble remark, Carl remembered rather uncomfortably the innumerable jibes he had directed at his cousin's ignorance.

"Well, you can teach yourself a lot," he said a little patronizingly. Paul laughed.

"I try to. But I—I can't even read decently, and it takes the dickens of a long time."

"Can't *read!*" cried Carl.

"Well, not enough to boast of. I never went to school in my life. A long time ago my mother or somebody must have taught me something, and then I picked up what I could here and there. There was an old fellow I knew years ago,—he was a passenger on a little coast trading vessel —we were going from Marseilles down to the south of Italy, and on the voyage, which was pretty slow, —because we sometimes stayed for two or three days at different ports,—he taught me a few things. And then I learned to read French pretty well, and a little Italian, and a young Englishman—a college fellow, who'd given up studying for the ministry and run away to sea—even taught me some Latin, though what under Heaven he thought I'd do with it I don't know. He was a funny one," said Paul,

chuckling reminiscently, "a thin little chap, with a long nose. He used to say that every gentleman should have a knowledge of the classics, and you'd see him washing the deck, with copy of some old Latin fellow's poetry sticking out of his back pocket."

"What did he go to sea for?" inquired Carl; for the first time he had deigned to listen to some of Paul's adventures, and he found himself getting very much interested.

"I don't know. His uncle was a lord or something—at least he told me so, and I daresay it was true. He said he was a younger son, though what that had to do with it I don't know. Anyway it seemed to be an awfully important thing for me to remember. He wanted to make something of himself, he said. I told him he'd do better as—well, anything but a cabin boy, or deck hand or whatever he was. But he said he loved the sea—though he was just about the worst sailor I ever saw."

"What happened to him?"

"I don't remember. Oh, yes, I do. The poor little cuss died—got typhus or something and off he went. Bill Tyler told me about it. They buried him at sea."

"Who was Bill Tyler?"

"Bill was—everything! He was an old bird—older than father. He'd done everything, seen everything—you never knew such a man! He couldn't write his own name, but he was the canniest, drollest—and talk about strength! Next to father,

I guess I liked him better than anyone on earth!" Paul's face glowed, and he launched forth into an animated account of his friend's virtues and exploits, urged on eagerly by Carl, who made him go on every time he stopped. There were no absurd exaggerations, a la Munchausen, in his tales that day. He was thinking only of amusing the sick, feeble boy, and making him forget his own dreary thoughts. Nor did he once reflect that it was this same boy who had told him so passionately that he "hated him, and always would."

Elise appearing at the door with Carl's tray stopped short at the sound of his laugh—the first spontaneous laugh she had heard from him in many a day.

"How much better you seem, dear," she said, setting the tray on his knees, and shaking up his pillows. "Paul, your lunch is waiting for you." She sent him a grateful glance.

"If you haven't anything special to do, come on up when you've fed," suggested Carl elegantly. Elise nodded eagerly, and following Paul to the door, said in a low voice,

"I wish you would, cousin. There isn't much to be done to-day—I can take care of it, and it seems to have done him so much good."

So Paul spent the afternoon, a long, sunny afternoon, in that dark room, talking to his cousin, telling him about people he had seen—and what a heterogeneous collection they were!—places he had visited, adventures he and his father had had to-

gether. A whole new world he opened to the young bookworm, who listened with his hands folded, and a keen but detached interest, to all these tales of action and happy-go-lucky wanderings.

"All that's great to hear about," remarked Carl, "but I don't think I'd like to live that way. Too much hopping about, and too—uncomfortable."

"I suppose it was uncomfortable—but I never knew what it was to *be* comfortable—that is, to be sure of a good bed to sleep in, and plenty to eat, and all that—so I never minded."

"It must bore you to be cooped up here—baking cakes! Ha-ha!" Carl laughed outright. "I never thought before of how funny that was!"

"I have," remarked Paul, drily.

"What do you suppose that Bill Tyler would say?"

"I can't imagine," replied Paul, smiling glumly. "He'd probably say it was a good job, and that I ought to thank Heaven for it. He was a practical old egg, or he pretended to be. He was forever preaching what he called 'hard sense'—and getting himself into more tight squeezes—he was worse than father. He had more common sense and used it less than any man I ever saw."

"Do you really want to be a painter?" asked Carl suddenly. "That's such a queer thing to want to be."

"Oh, well," said Paul, evidently not anxious to pursue the subject.

"And so—*useless*."

"That's what Bill Tyler used to say. And yet *he* was the one who took me to a picture gallery for

the first time in my life—I was only eleven or twelve years old. And it was there that I met old Peguignot—so it was partly Bill's fault that I began to think about painting at all. The old duffer! He'd spend an entire afternoon rambling around some gallery, going into raptures over this picture and that, pointing out what he liked and what he didn't like—and then when we'd come out, he'd say, 'but that's all nonsense, and waste of time.' "

"Who was Peguignot?"

"Why, he was a little artist—a funny, shabby, excitable little guy, with a perfectly enormous moustache that looked as if it were made out of a lot of black hairpins; and his eyebrows were just like it. When he talked and got enthusiastic about something, they'd all work up and down. Bill and I came upon him one day in some gallery or other. He was sitting up on a high stool making a copy of a big religious painting. Bill began to talk to him, and, I suppose, just to tease him, started on his favorite line about what nonsense it all was. I thought Peguignot would blow up. He shook a whole handful of wet paint-brushes in Bill's face, called him every name he could think of—I began to laugh and then he turned on me, and told me I was a miserable boy, and please both of us to go far away from him. But I said I agreed with him altogether, and then we both started in on Bill. Well, anyhow it wound up by all of us getting to be the best of friends; and after that Bill and I used to go around and see him quite often. And he

taught me all I ever learned about painting. He wasn't very good himself, and he certainly wasn't successful, but he knew a lot, and when he wasn't exploding about something, he could tell what he knew very clearly. Poor little beggar, he had a hard time of it—he was as poverty-stricken as Job most of the time." And then Paul began to laugh. "I remember one day his landlady came up to get his rent. He heard her coming, and got into a perfect panic, and was actually trying to crawl under his bed when she knocked at the door. Then he got very calm and dignified, and told me to let her in. So in she came, and then an argument began, and finally both of them started to weep and wring their hands—you never heard such a rumpus. Finally he said to her, 'Madam, put me out. Put me out on the streets—it is what I deserve,' and he began to hunt for his bedroom slippers which were the things that were most precious to him I suppose. And then she threw her apron over her head and wailed, and said she couldn't do that because he was so 'leetle.' Well, at last he took a picture that *I* had painted down from his easel, and said to her, 'Madam, I give you this. Sell it, and keep the money.' Well, she stood there glowering as if she simply couldn't think of anything strong enough to say; until she suddenly roared out, 'Ah-h-h! You leetle *moustache!* Why don't you sell it *yourself!* Then I should have my money.' And she took the picture with both hands, and banged him over the head with it. But at last she said she'd

wait another month, and then she would have him imprisoned—and off she went with my picture."

Carl laughed.

"And did he pay her the next month?"

"I don't know. In any case, he certainly wasn't imprisoned. But don't think he took his debts lightly. He was ashamed of them and he was ashamed of himself; and he worked for money in the only way he could, and never tried to shirk his responsibilities. People knew that, and they were lenient with him, because he was honest and good and they loved him."

There was a pause, then Carl asked curiously, but with some hesitation,

"If I—if my eyes *don't* get all right, what will you do?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean—will you stay on in the business?"

"In any case, it's my job, isn't it?" returned Paul evasively. Then suddenly, he dropped his face in his hands. For so many nights, in the little room to which he had been relegated since Carl's illness, he had been wrestling with that problem. A hundred times he had decided that there would be only one course open to him in the event that Carl should not get well; he would stay with his family and help them. His uncle was getting old, and the silent, tragic appeal in the poor man's eyes, and his dreadful anxiety about his son had touched Paul even more than Aunt Gertrude's sorrow.

"Ah, well, what's the use of trying to settle the

whole course of your life," he said aloud, but more as if he were speaking to himself. "You get worked up, and start pitying yourself before there's anything definite to pity yourself for." Then suddenly, he said, "Tell me, cousin, I have wanted to ask you—why is it that you hated me? If you don't want to answer never mind. We seem to be friends now—or I may be mistaken."

Carl was silent for several moments, then he said rather gruffly,

"I—there was no reason perhaps. Let that be. You were right—when you said that I didn't hate you as much as I thought I did."

That was the last reference that was made to their former enmity. They were too different, perhaps, ever to be really intimate, but the hatchet was buried between them.

During Carl's convalescence Paul was with him a great deal. His stock of stories seemed inexhaustible, and in lieu of books Carl found them the only source of novel entertainment to be had; and for the time being Paul was exempted from his duties in the Bakery to amuse his cousin. It was not any too amusing for *him;* but he willingly passed hour after hour at Carl's bedside. It was the sight of the bandaged eyes that kept his sympathy keen and made him gentle and patient even when Carl was fretful and hard to please.

One day Carl said to him,

"Why don't you read aloud to me? The doctor says it'll be all right now. I've a mountain of stuff

to make up for school, and we'll both gain something."

Paul blushed. He was not particularly keen on displaying his shortcomings outright to Carl, even if he did confess them. But on second thoughts, he got the book that his cousin asked for, and opening it, plunged in bravely. It was a humiliating experience for him, to have to stop before a long word, and pronounce it syllable by syllable, and although Carl did not laugh at him, he corrected him with an air of grave superiority that was even more trying. But the very fact that he did not shine in this particular province, increased Carl's good will toward him.

"You are getting on very well," he said in a patronizing tone. "Keep it up."

The books that they read frequently led to arguments—friendly debates, and these were Carl's special delight. He liked to pretend that he was addressing a jury, and would launch forth into a flood of eloquence, to which Paul listened very respectfully, usually taking care not to contradict his cousin or to wound his vanity by remaining unconvinced by his oratory. But sometimes he would get carried away himself, and a vigorous battle would follow, in which Paul had only his clear, simple reasoning to pit against Carl's confusing knowledge. But both of them enjoyed it; Carl loved to dispute any point at all, and Paul "liked the exercise."

But in the long run, Paul found Carl's favorite occupations very little to his taste. He grew weary

of his cousin's books, with their long-winded dissertations, he positively hated the dim room; and the innumerable games of checkers that they played, when Carl's eyes finally began to improve, gradually developed in him a profound detestation of that pastime. His only satisfaction came to him from his aunt's and uncle's gratitude.

By the end of the month Carl was well enough to sit up in a chair by the window for three or four hours a day, and even to take off his eyeshade for a little while in the evening when the light was softer. The family happiness over this improvement was boundless, and in the late afternoons everyone gathered in Carl's room. These were gay occasions, and even Mr. Lambert, who always sat beside his son, and never took his eyes from his face, cracked jokes, and laughed and was in the best humor imaginable.

One Sunday afternoon they were thus collected—all of them, including Granny, who sat rocking serenely back and forth, smiling benignly and a little absent-mindedly upon them all, winding a skein of deep magenta wool, which Lottie held for her. The whole room was in pleasant disorder, books and games lay scattered around, for Mr. Lambert had relaxed his usual strict Sabbath rules while Carl was ill, and permitted all sorts of uncustomary amusements. Minie was cutting new paper dolls out of the Sunday paper, and painting them in glorious hues. Everyone was gossiping and chattering—everyone, that is except Jane and Paul, who sat on

the little bench that made a seat in the embrasure of the casement window.

Jane, who had missed her cousin severely during the last weeks, was content to have him with her again, and sat beside him, looking through the section of the newspaper that Minie had graciously spared. Paul, a trifle out of spirits, was staring out of the window. It was open, admitting a gentle evening breeze, which rustled through the full-blown foliage of Jane's beloved nut-tree. Below, on the other side of the street some children were playing hop-scotch. And from somewhere came the sound of boyish voices singing in "close harmony"—"I was seeing Nelly ho-ome, I was seeing Nelly home, It was from Aunt Dinah's quilting party, I was seeing Nel-ly home."

Suddenly Jane laid her hand on Paul's to attract his attention. "Look! Look at this, Paul," she said in a low voice, putting the paper on his knee, and pointing to a paragraph.

He glanced down and read,

"C——. June 1st. The Academy of Arts announces that it will offer a series of prizes for painting and sculpture, to be competed for according to the following rules." Then followed a list of regulations, after which the notice went on to say that, "All work must be submitted on or before September 1st. Three prizes will be awarded in each department. No work will be considered unless etc., etc."

"Well, what of it?" said Paul, shortly.

"Can't you—why don't you—"

"You know I can't. Look at that kid down there, will you—"

"Paul, why not?"

"Because I can't, I tell you," he repeated, irritably.

"But why don't you try," persisted Jane, undaunted. "If you don't win anything, there's no harm done, and if you *should,* Paul—if you *should*—"

"When and where would I be able to do any work, will you tell me?" He spoke almost angrily, but he took the paper from her hand and looked at it again.

"What are you two whispering about?" inquired Carl. He still felt a twinge of jealousy when he saw Jane and Paul talking without taking him into their confidence.

"Nothing," said Paul. "Just something Jane saw in the paper." And picking up Minie's rubber ball he began to bounce and catch it monotonously.

"What is it?"

With a shrug of his shoulders, Paul handed the paper over to Carl, pointing out the paragraph. Carl gave it to Mr. Lambert.

"Read it, father." So Mr. Lambert put on his spectacles, while Jane looked uneasily at Paul.

Mr. Lambert read it aloud, and then without making any comment, laid the paper aside. He looked displeased.

"Why don't you compete, Paul?" said Carl suddenly. "There'd be no harm in trying."

Then Aunt Gertrude, glancing timidly at her husband, found courage to put in a word.

There was a silence, during which everyone waited for Mr. Lambert to say something; but no remark from him was forthcoming. That he was annoyed could be seen plainly, but because the suggestion had come from Carl he maintained his silence.

"Do you think you'd stand any chance of winning, Paul?" Carl asked secure in his peculiar privileges of free speech.

"I don't know. How should I?"

Jane was simply on tenter-hooks. If only Carl would take up the case!

"Would you like to try it?"

"Yes. I would."

"Well, why don't you? You could find some place—"

"That isn't the point," interrupted Paul, looking directly at his uncle, "it's up to you, Uncle Peter. You told me that I wasn't to touch a paint-brush while I was in your house. And I haven't. But I—"

"Well, you'll let him, won't you, father? He might as well have a go at it."

"My boy, I think it is hardly—"

"But it's only a little matter, father. I'd like to see how he'd make out. We'd feel pretty fine if he *should* win anything, and if he doesn't, there's nothing lost."

Mr. Lambert bit his lip. But at that time he could no more have refused his son's slightest wish than he could have struck him.

"Well, well—go ahead if you want, Paul. I am

sure I wish you every success." It was stiffly and unwillingly said, but it was a victory nonetheless, and Paul did not know whether to be more amazed at his uncle's concession or at Carl's intercession. Jane, her face beaming with delight, started to clap her hands, and then realizing that any evidences of unseemly joy might have unpleasant results, quickly folded them in her lap.

And so it came about, through the play of circumstances, that the one member of the Lambert family who had been so bitterly inimical to Paul for eight months assumed the rôle of benefactor, and gallantly squared his debt by a few right words spoken at exactly the right moment.

CHAPTER XII

JEFF ROBERTS

"Do you think I'll be able to put it across?" Paul asked, despondently, stepping back from the half finished picture and eyeing it with his head on one side and a frown on his brow.

Jane, perched on an old barrel, her chin on her fists, studied the embryo masterpiece with a grave, judicial air.

"I think it is going to be *very* good," she observed at length.

"Do you, honestly?" Paul knew of course that Jane was about as capable of judging as Anna, but he had reached the point where encouragement from any source was sweet. "Lord, I hope I get it done in time."

"You will," said Jane. Paul grinned at her.

"You're about the most optimistic character I ever knew. I suppose you think I'm certain to win a first prize."

"Don't *you* think so?"

"No, my child. I don't think there's a chance in the world."

"Oh, Paul! But you'll win something."

"No, my jovial Jane, I won't. But that's neither

here nor there. Whew! Let's get out of here. I'm melting. How about you?"

"It *is* pretty hot," Jane admitted. It most certainly was. An attic, even on coolish days seems able to store up heat as no other place can, and on a sizzling August afternoon a bakeoven is Iceland in comparison. The only thing to be said in favor of the Lambert's attic was that it had a northern light if not a northern temperature, and here Paul had set to work.

"Want to take a walk?" he suggested, dropping his paintbrushes into a can of turpentine.

"Can't. I promised Elise I'd help her with some of the mending."

"Well, I think I'll browse around for a while Tell Aunt Gertrude I'll be back for supper. She said there wasn't a thing for me to do."

"Where are you going?"

"Nowhere in particular. I feel like doing something rash and reckless, but there's no danger of anything like *that*—here. Where's Carl?"

"Out in the garden with Elise and the twins."

"Well—good-bye. I'll be back in half an hour or so."

Paul selected for his solitary ramble a certain rough, dusty, shady lane that led down past the ruins of an old mill. Here on those breathless afternoons a crowd of little urchins were wont to gather to splash and paddle in the gurgling stream that tossed over its stony bed on to the water-fall above the mill. On the opposite side of the road

rose a wooded hill, where the tree-tops were gilded with ruddy sunlight, and the deep fern scented recesses were always cool and dim.

The shade and freshness of the woods on that hot day were not to be resisted, and Paul turned into them, following a soft, weed-grown road that lead along a little tributary of the mill-stream. But he was feeling restless and even a little rebellious. The calm, uneventful course of his life during the past nine months had gotten on his nerves, and he found himself longing for some kind of change or excitement. What wouldn't he give to see old Bill Tyler coming toward him at that moment!

He stopped, and leaning against an old wooden railing, stared down at the stream that flowed by at the foot of the steep bank. For more than a month he had been working as hard as he could at his picture, taking good care not to let it interfere with his other duties, lest his uncle should recall his permission; Aunt Gertrude tried to help him, and he had progressed; but there wasn't a chance in a million of his winning anything, and he was not sure but that he had made a mistake in undertaking the task at all. He started on again, walking slowly, with his hands buried in his pockets, forgetful of the passage of time, and of his uncle's dislike of having anyone late for a meal. Suddenly he stopped. It seemed to him that someone had called his name.

Looking back over his shoulder he saw a small man running easily along the road toward him.

"Hello! Where are you off to?" inquired the

newcomer, as he came up, smiling in a friendly way. "I saw you back there, and thought I recognized you. How are you?"

It was no other than the notorious Jefferson Roberts, his face beaming with a friendly, winning smile, and his hand outstretched. Paul shook the hand, and said that he was off to nowhere—that he was just walking.

"Communing with Nature?" said Jeff, cocking his head on one side, while his bright brown eyes twinkled merrily. "May I commune with you? I'm going in your direction."

"Come ahead. That is, unless you're in a hurry. I *won't* walk fast."

"Oh, I'm never in a hurry. What have you been doing since I saw you last?"

Paul answered the question briefly without going into any details.

"What an industrious life!" exclaimed Jeff gaily. "How is your good little cousin, Carl Lambert? Do you remember that day in Allenboro? He was horrified at you—he thinks I'm the most wicked creature alive. But then, most of those good souls *do*. And why? simply because I like to enjoy myself—and succeed at it." And as he said this he laughed so spontaneously, his face was so full of arch, easy-going good nature that Paul joined in his laugh, feeling convinced that the tales about Jeff were mostly absurd exaggerations. In fifteen minutes or so he began to believe, also, that there was a great deal of good in Jeff that had been most uncharitably

overlooked. There was nothing "smarty" about him; he seemed frank and boyish, overflowing with high spirits, impulsive, enthusiastic, and happy-go-lucky all at once. He was even rather a confiding soul, and strolling along beside Paul, whose arm he had taken, chattered naively about himself and his affairs with child-like frankness.

Presently his mood changed; he began to blame himself for his idleness, and to talk about his mother. He told Paul that he had decided to get a good job in the fall, and work hard.

"I'm a lot more serious than anyone thinks, let me tell you," he remarked gravely. "I like fun, but I'm not like the rest of those chumps you saw up at Allenboro. *They* think they know me—but they don't. They only see one side—so does everyone else. But I'll show 'em. One of these days I'll be a nice, respectable—Mayor, with three chins, and a gold watch-chain." This fancy sent him off into a fit of amusement. His humors changed so rapidly from melancholy to gaiety that there was no way of being sure that he was not joking when he seemed grave, and serious when he was laughing; but he was a delightful companion, and the two boys sauntered along talking as if they had been intimates from their childhood.

Suddenly, Paul realized that much time must have flown since Jeff interrupted his meditations.

"Gee! It must be pretty late," he exclaimed looking up through the trees, trying to guess the time by the sun. "Have you got a watch?"

Jeff laughed, and pulling his watch-chain from his pocket, displayed a bunch of keys, which he twirled jauntily.

"My watch, I'm sorry to say, is on a short vacation. But you don't have to bother about the time. Come on with me—I'm going to scare up some of the fellows, and see what we can find to do."

Paul hesitated. He was decidedly in the mood for falling in with Jeff's harmless suggestion; besides, he would certainly be late for supper, and, was consequently, slated for his uncle's reproof anyhow.

"All right. What are you going to do?"

"Oh, sit around and talk most likely. Probably ramble off to get something to eat, and then we might go up to see Tom Babcock—he's a nice fellow. You'd like him."

This seemed a mild and agreeable program, and was very much to Paul's taste. If his uncle should ask him where he'd been—well, hang it, did he have to give an account of everything he did, as if he were a child of ten? And all this fuss about Jeff Roberts was such utter nonsense anyhow.

Accordingly, he accepted Jeff's friendly invitation, and they went off together following the road on through the woods which led by a short cut to the neighboring town, of Goldsboro.

Goldsboro was a progressive young community where, unquestionably you could find more to do than at Frederickstown. The streets were brightly lighted at night, every Wednesday and Saturday

evening during the summer a band played for two hours in the Square, and the shops stayed open until ten o'clock, and there was even a theatre where such old classics as "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "The Old Homestead," and "Billy, the Kid," were enacted by an ambitious stock company.

Jeff seemed to know everyone, and it was not long before he had collected a jolly party of five or six boys. He also knew where you could get a capital sea-food supper, and insisted that Paul should be his guest. In fact, Paul found the attentions bestowed upon him by this rather famous youth, decidedly flattering though he was at a loss to know just why Jeff should suddenly have begun to treat him as if he were his best friend. The truth was that Jeff was inclined to sudden friendships, which were often as speedily broken as made.

Supper over, it was suggested that they drop around and see what Tom Babcock was doing.

Tom was a young man older even than Jeff—two-and-twenty, perhaps, or twenty-three. He lived magnificently alone in a small room over a corner drugstore, where they found him smoking his pipe and hanging half way out of his window to watch the crowd in the Square, and to hear the strains of the brass-band which at that moment was playing "Kathleen Mavourneen" with deep pathos.

Upon the arrival of his guests, Tom lighted his gas, and after a little conversation they all sat down to a game of cards.

Paul enjoyed himself immensely. He liked Jeff,

he liked Tom, he liked Jim, and Jack and Harry. They were "nice fellows," all of them. Why they should be considered such a dangerous crew was more than he could understand.

And meantime the night wore on.

In the Lambert household mild wonder at Paul's absence gave way to anxiety.

"Well, I suppose the boy knows how to take care of himself," remarked Mr. Lambert, drily.

"Perhaps, Peter, you had better put the latch-key under the doormat," suggested Aunt Gertrude, but Mr. Lambert would not agree to this.

"No, my dear. He knows quite well that everything is locked at ten o'clock. If he prefers to be roaming around the country at that time, he must be prepared to take the consequences. I hope you do not expect me to alter all the rules of the household for the boy."

So at ten o'clock, Paul not yet having made his appearance, the front door was locked, and the family went to bed.

But Jane was not able to take his absence so calmly. Suppose he had got lost? Suppose he had hurt himself? He might even have been kidnapped. These fears made it impossible for her to sleep, and so she sat down at her window, determined to wait up for him all night if necessary. With the house locked, how could he get in—where could he go?

The time that she waited seemed endless. The tones of the church clock, striking eleven, boomed solemnly through the stillness that lay over the town.

All the houses were darkened; the street was quiet. Now and then, solitary footsteps rang out on the bricks, and Jane sat up eagerly only to hear them die away in a neighboring block.

Where *could* he be? She was almost in tears when after an eternity of waiting she heard the sound of whistling far up the street.

"That *must* be Paul. It *must* be!" She leaned far out of the window, trying to get a glimpse of the wanderer, who was in fact coming nearer to the house. At last he came into the light of the street lamp, and she recognized him with a great sigh of relief. In another moment she had flown noiselessly down the stairs, and unbolted the door with as little squeaking and rattling as possible.

"Hello," said Paul as calmly as if he had just run up to the corner to mail a letter.

"Oh, *where* have you been?"

"Where have I been?" Paul was instantly on the defensive. "Why—what's the matter? What's everything locked up for?"

"Sh! Everyone's asleep but me. Oh, I thought you were *dead!*"

"Good Heaven's—*why?* It isn't late."

"It's nearly twelve. Everyone's been in bed for ages. We couldn't imagine what had become of you—"

"Well, I must say I don't see why there's so much fuss. I just walked over to Goldsboro to see what was going on, and fooled around there for a while. It was later than I thought when I

went out, and when I found out I'd miss supper, I thought I might as well take a good walk, and get something to eat over there."

"Oh,—well we couldn't imagine—you'd better walk softly, Paul."

For some reason, Paul suddenly chose to think that Jane was reproving him.

"I don't see why I can't be a little late without everyone's getting so worked up over it. Do you mean to say that I mustn't leave the house without telling everyone exactly what time I'll be back?" he grumbled. "Gee whiz! Life isn't worth living if you have to be worrying every minute—"

"*Sh-sh,* Paul! You'll wake everybody up," whispered Jane. He subsided a little, but was still muttering indignantly when he parted from her and tiptoed cautiously up to his room.

The next morning at breakfast, Mr. Lambert asked him casually what had delayed him, and appeared quite satisfied at his off-hand answer.

"And how did you get in? Everything is always locked at ten, as you know."

"I heard him whistling, Daddy, and I let him in," spoke up Jane. Mr. Lambert merely said,

"Ah! Well, don't let it happen again my boy. It made me very uneasy."

No further reference was made to the matter.

"There was no harm in it," thought Paul. "They have the impression that Jeff is a black sheep, and it would be a silly thing to go out of my way to tell 'em that I saw him again. Uncle would have a fit,

and it's such a little thing to deliberately get up a row about."

And so being satisfied that his mild escapade would have no uncomfortable results he thought no more about it.

CHAPTER XIII

DISASTER

Poor Janey was feeling very blue indeed. During the last week it seemed to her that Paul had somehow grown so different—rather inclined to be cross and uncommunicative, and even to avoid her company. That very afternoon he had told her please not to bother him while he was painting, or he never would get his picture done, and twice when she had offered to take a walk with him, he had refused her company with no very gracious excuse.

Thus ignored and rebuffed, she had sadly devoted herself to deeds of charity, and on that sultry afternoon sat with Carl reading aloud to him from a fat dull book about the ancient Britons. They were sitting in the little garden, where the shadow of the house offered some protection from the sun; Carl reposing like a Sultan in his easy chair, gazing up at the motionless weathervane on the gable of the attic, and occasionally begging Jane *"not* to mumble her words." The attic was on the third floor just above Granny's room, in a part of the house that formed an ell, bounding the garden on the south side with its ivy-covered wall.

"I say, Jane, do you suppose that Paul is *smok-*

ing?" said Carl suddenly, interrupting the monotonous flow of Jane's reading.

"What?"

"Well, that's smoke, isn't it? coming out of the attic window—and cigar smoke, too, or I'll eat my hat!"

Jane looked up. It was an undeniable fact that a blue spiral issued from the attic, and, caught by the faint breeze, was wafted gracefully upwards, and dissolved. A very faint scent drifted down to the garden, and that scent—if such it could be called—was of tobacco. Paul, happily ignorant of the dismayed interest he had roused in the garden below, was sampling a cigar that Jeff had lavishly bestowed on him.

"Well, all I've got to say is that if he knows what is good for him, he'll cut *that* out," observed Carl drily.

"I guess—I guess he's just doing it for fun," said Jane.

"He won't think it fun if father catches him. But it's none of *my* business, I suppose. Go on."

Jane went on reading, furtively glancing aloft every now and then to see if the tell-tale puffs of smoke were still issuing from the open window. To her intense relief they had stopped after a few minutes, and presently she heard Paul talking to her mother in the kitchen.

"Do you really like this book?" she asked at last, looking at her brother pathetically.

"Very much. But you needn't read any more if you're tired. Here's Elise, now, anyway."

Elise had just entered by the garden gate.

"Carl! Jane! What do you think! The most exciting thing—"

"Lily Deacon is engaged to Mr. Sheridan," said Jane promptly. Elise stared at her, her round blue eyes wide with amazement.

"How did you know?"

"I put two and two together. Aren't I clever?"

"No, how *did* you guess, Janey? Lily hasn't told anyone but me."

"Well, I knew it *was* going to happen, and I knew that you'd been up to see Lily this afternoon, and I guessed the rest. Isn't it *nice,* though!" cried Jane, clapping her hands. "And you know *I'm* really responsible for it."

"You!" hooted Carl derisively.

"Yes, me. When did it happen, Elise, and when are they going to be married? I do so love a wedding, and there hasn't been one here for ages. Do you suppose she'll wear a veil?"

Elise, who under her placid exterior had the most romantic of souls, sat down to recount all the details that she had gleaned from her best friend.

"And she's going to live in that lovely house, and she'll travel, and she—goodness, do you suppose Paul has burned up *another* batch of cakes?" she broke off short in her rhapsody over Lily's prospects to sniff the air.

"Don't you smell smoke? I do hope he hasn't

had another disaster—he's been getting along so well. Well, anyway—where was I?"

"You said she was going to travel. What *I* want to know is when the wedding is going to be," said Jane.

"Oh, that isn't decided yet—in the spring, I think. You know, that doesn't smell like cake burning. It smells like rags. I suppose somebody's burning trash."

Carl laughed and looked at Jane; but the burning smell did not resemble tobacco at all, and besides, Paul was still in the kitchen with Aunt Gertrude.

"Go on and tell some more, Elise," said Jane.

"I've told you all I know. I must get you your milk, Carl."

A minute later Elise reappeared at the dining room door, bearing a tray well stocked with milk and cookies, and followed by Paul and Aunt Gertrude.

"Dear me, who *can* be burning rubbish?" exclaimed Mrs. Lambert. "Don't you smell smoke, children?"

"*I* do, I can tell you," said Carl. "By Jove, Paul, what's going on up in your den?"

Everyone looked up in consternation to the attic window. Paul had closed it before he came down, but smoke was coming slowly from under the pane.

"Good heavens! It couldn't be on fire!" cried Elise. "Run, Paul! Run, *quickly!*"

But Paul had not waited to be urged. Up the stairs he was flying, as fast as his long legs could carry him, followed by Jane, Elise and poor Aunt

Gertrude, whose only thought was for Granny, the twins having gone out to play early in the afternoon.

The smoke was already thick on the second floor.

"Elise, you and Aunt Gertrude take Granny downstairs," ordered Paul. "Jane, you'd better not come up."

"I'll get a bucket of water. Oh, Paul! Your *picture!*"

"Never mind my picture—get the water *quick!*" And Paul dashed on up the stairs.

With his heart in his boots, he made his way to the attic, trying to hold his breath so that he would not swallow the smoke.

It turned out that so far as danger was concerned there was no great cause for excitement. Although the attic was dense with smoke, the cause of it was only a small blaze in the heap of rags near the window, which subsided under two bucketfuls of water.

Jane, whom Paul had not allowed to come up, waited for news at the foot of the stairs; but after he had informed her that the fire was out, she heard nothing more from him. After a few moments she shouted,

"Paul! Are you all right?"

"Oh, *I'm* all right," replied a muffled voice, in a tone of the utmost despair.

"Well, come on down, or you'll smother. What's happened?"

"I'll be down in a second," and then through the fog Paul appeared slowly, descending the stairs carrying a square of canvas.

"Is it hurt?" asked Jane, fearfully. "Oh, Paul!"

"I don't know. I can't see it properly yet." But his face showed that he expected the worst. Neither of them spoke a word until they reached the garden again, where Aunt Gertrude pounced upon Jane.

"Oh, *child,* how you frightened me! Paul, are you quite sure everything's all right? Oh, how did it start—was there really a *blaze?"*

"Just a little one—it's all out—a few rags. I pitched 'em all out of the window. I'm—sorry, Aunt Gertrude."

"Oh, my poor boy—your picture!"

"What's the matter? Is it ruined?" asked Carl. Jane said nothing, but stood looking first at her cousin's face, and then at the smoke-begrimed and blistered canvas on which there was hardly a semblance of the picture that had been so nearly completed.

"Yes," said Paul, with the calmness of despair, "it's ruined. It's ruined all right."

No one knew what to say, and a silence followed, until Elise asked timidly if he didn't have time to do another.

"In four days? This is the twenty-seventh. No, cousin, I couldn't—and besides, even if I could, I haven't anything to do it with. So I guess that's all there is to that." He tried to sound cheerful, and turning the picture against the wall of the house, announced that he was going back to the attic to see if everything was calm up there.

"Well, that's pretty hard luck," remarked Carl. "I daresay he's more broken up than he lets on."

Jane had begun to cry, hiding her face in Granny's lap. Not even Paul could have been as cruelly disappointed as she.

"Oh, he *would* have won something! I'm sure he would have!" she wept, disconsolately. "He said he didn't think so, but he *did,* and I know he did."

"Well, one way or the other, it's his affair," said Carl, "and I certainly don't see why *you* should be in such a stew over it."

"It is my affair, too," wailed Jane, and at this characteristic remark no one could help smiling.

"Come, Janey, darling, there's no use in taking it so to heart," said Mrs. Lambert, laying her hand softly on the curly head. "We are all dreadfully distressed about Paul, but he has taken his misfortune bravely, and after all he will have many more chances. Elise, isn't that the bell in the bake-shop? Dear me, what can people think coming in to all that smoke. I wonder if it's clearing out at all. Come now, Janey, cheer up."

Janey lifted her face from Granny's knees, and wiped her wet cheeks with the palms of her hands, leaving long smudges.

"There now. We must all be thankful that there was no worse harm done," said her mother, kissing her. "Come along, Elise. You come with me too, Janey. We mustn't keep anyone waiting."

But Paul was already in the bakeshop, and was

calmly counting out change to the customer when his aunt came in. He was rather pale, but apparently quite cheerful.

"I looked around in the attic again, Aunt Gertrude. It's all right up there," he said calmly, when the customer had gone. "The floor is charred a bit where the rags were—but that's all the damage. And the smoke's clearing out. It didn't get into the rooms much, because all the doors were closed."

"We're all so distressed about your picture, my dear," said Aunt Gertrude, laying her hands on his arm. "I know what disappointment you must feel —and you are a very plucky boy."

Paul looked down at her, started to say something, and then abruptly left the shop.

"But how in the world could it have started?" wondered Aunt Gertrude, for the first time. "He surely couldn't have had the oil-stove lighted in this weather, and it couldn't have started by itself."

But Elise had no theory to offer, and Jane was in tears again, so Aunt Gertrude carried her mystification out to the kitchen, to see whether Anna had returned with the groceries.

At six o'clock, Mr. Lambert returned to the bosom of a highly excited family, and, at the supper table, listened with a peculiarly austere expression to the incoherent accounts of the disaster. Presently, he held up his hand.

"Come, come! I cannot find the beginning or end of all this," he said, and then bending his gaze

on Paul, added, slowly and sternly, "there was a fire to-day in the attic—where you, Paul, have been—er—working. So much I understand. But what I do *not* understand is—how this fire started."

There was a silence. Jane glanced at Carl, and Carl took a drink of water.

"We hear of such things as spontaneous combustion," pursued Mr. Lambert, "but for anything of the sort to take place, there must be certain conditions. I do not imagine that such conditions could exist—in a pile of rags—under an open window. No," said Mr. Lambert, shaking his head, "I must discard that theory."

Again the unpleasant silence followed these remarks. Paul, who had eaten nothing, drummed nervously on the table.

"You were there, were you not? a short time before the fire started?" inquired Mr. Lambert. "Did you notice any—er—odor of burning?"

"Why, Paul was with me in the kitchen for quite a little while before any of us noticed anything, Peter," Aunt Gertrude broke in innocently.

"Well," said Mr. Lambert, shaking his head, but still keeping his eyes fixed immovably on his nephew's face, "it is quite beyond my comprehension. How anything of the sort—"

At this point Paul suddenly interrupted.

"There isn't anything so very queer about it, uncle," he said coolly enough, at first, though once he had spoken his courage seemed to leave him a

little. "I—I was smoking up there, and I suppose I threw a match—or maybe—"

"Ah-h-h!" said Mr. Lambert slowly. Then he pressed his lips together, and for a moment or two said nothing. At length he observed,

"There are one or two matters I should like to take up with you after supper, Paul. However, we won't go into them just now." And then he changed the subject with an abruptness that so far from drawing the thoughts of his family *away* from speculations upon what was in store for Paul, only made them more dismally foreboding. And when after supper the family showed a desire to disperse before the coming storm, Mr. Lambert solemnly asked them to remain while he asked Paul a few questions.

"Peter, don't scold the poor boy to-night," said Aunt Gertrude in a low voice. "He has—he is very much distressed and disappointed."

"It is true that he brought his own punishment upon himself," returned Mr. Lambert, "and I should, perhaps, overlook the matter of his smoking this time, although he knew quite as well as Carl that I have absolutely forbidden that. It is a far more serious matter that I have to speak of."

And with this he turned to Paul, who had been trying to collect his thoughts. He was not ignorant of what the serious matter might be, but it seemed to him that his uncle was making a good deal more out of it than it was worth, and he had

begun to wonder whether he had been guilty of some crime that so far he knew nothing of.

"I have heard to-day—from a source that I fear is only too reliable—certain reports concerning you, which in justice to you I must ask you to deny or confirm," said Mr. Lambert.

"What are they, uncle?" asked Paul.

"I was told—and by one of my most respected fellow-citizens—that you have been seen not once, but at least half a dozen time of late with a young man of a most undesirable character and reputation—Jefferson Roberts. Could my informant have been mistaken? Have you or have you not seen this young man several times—recently?"

Paul swallowed. The entire family was aghast, for it was very plain that Mr. Lambert was deeply angered.

"Well?" said the old merchant. "Is this true?"

"Yes, uncle."

"You knew what my feelings would be if I learned that this *was* true?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Yes," repeated Mr. Lambert, "I think you knew very well that you were disobeying my strictest injunctions. Just before Christmas you were —or could have been—seen with this notorious youth—a gambler, a rascal, a shameless loafer. When I learned of this, I pardoned you, thinking that you might not have known how deeply outraged I should feel at discovering that any member of my household should wish to associate with

such a person. But now you have disobeyed me without such excuse. What am I to think? You give me no choice but to believe that you find pleasure in disobeying me, and mortifying me."

After a pause, he went on,

"Yes, mortifying me. You have treated me as I have not deserved to be treated. I have given you a home, I have considered your welfare as attentively as I have considered the welfare of my own children; I have been lenient with you, though you would, perhaps, not be willing to admit as much —and in return I find you willing to—perhaps you are not aware that in associating with this Roberts and his crew you not only injure your own standing in this town, but injure me also. For more than a hundred years the family whose name you bear, and my own have stood for every principle of good citizenship; and that honorable reputation is to be marred through the willfulness of a youth who counts such a thing so lightly that he will toss it away for a few hours' idle amusement!"

This grave, stern accusation was not what Paul had expected. He turned white and then blushed crimson. His vocal chords felt stiff, but at last he managed to speak.

"I—I didn't think that Jeff Roberts was judged fairly, sir," he stammered.

"Ah!"

"And what have I done that's so terrible?" cried Paul, "I only—"

"You knew that you were disobeying me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Perhaps you think that at eighteen years of age you are a better judge of character than grey headed men and women? Perhaps you think that you are old enough to be your own master?" Mr. Lambert got up. "I cannot allow willful disobedience in my house. You have been guilty of it too often. I feel now that it would be best for all concerned—for you especially—to—let you *be* your own master. You are free now to go where you like, make friends with whom you will, direct your own life as you please." He stopped. There was not a sound in the room—indeed no one quite realized that Mr. Lambert's words actually constituted a dismissal.

"Your father," continued the old man immovably, "left with me a small amount of money, which I shall turn over to you at once. It should be sufficient to maintain you until you are able to support yourself, and I am willing to add to it if necessary. I think—I believe that in the course of time experience will show you that I have been just with you, and if you show yourself worthy I shall always be ready to help you to the best of my ability."

Aunt Gertrude looked pleadingly at her husband, but he did not see her. No one else had courage to say anything, and indeed to do so would have been worse than useless; for whether Mr. Lambert had judged his nephew too harshly or not, it was certain that he could not be made to look at the

facts of the case in a different light. To him two things were of paramount importance,—obedience to his wishes, and respect for public opinion, and Paul had offended against both of these fundamental statutes. The old merchant had not exaggerated when he said that his nephew's conduct had mortified him.

Paul made no attempt to defend himself; he was too much dazed by all that the day had brought forth to find a word to say.

Well, he was free. He should have been glad—and only a few months before he would have been. But looking helplessly around the table, from one face to the other he realized suddenly that he was *not* glad. Why, he had grown to love them all—he had even a certain fondness for Carl. Who was there now to care whether he got into scrapes or out of them, whether he won prizes or burnt his pictures to cinders, whether he was defeated or triumphant. But his face showed nothing of what was passing in his mind. Somewhere in the distance Mr. Lambert was saying,

"I wished for all of you to hear what I had to say to my nephew, so that you would understand that I judged him by nothing but what he himself admitted. And I believe, Gertrude, that when you have considered the matter as carefully as I have you will feel that I am doing only what is just, and, I hope, wise. Paul is not a child, but a young man, quite able to think for himself. It is plain that our ways and customs are disagreeable to him,

and I have come to believe that it is only fair to him to let him go his own way as he thinks best. And—er—that is all."

One by one the others rose from the table, and left the room. Only Paul and his uncle remained.

"Have I made myself quite clear?" asked Mr. Lambert, sitting down at his desk, and putting up the roll-top.

"Yes, uncle. I—when do you want me to—go?"

"That I leave entirely to your convenience," returned Mr. Lambert. He opened a drawer and took out an envelope with a rubber band around it, which he gave to his nephew. "If you should find that this is not sufficient for your needs you may let me know. I am very sorry that you have forced this painful duty upon me—I had hoped that you—I still hope that you will realize—"

"My responsibilities," said Paul absently. "Oh, I have—but never mind. I'm sorry, uncle. I didn't understand—"

"Quite so. I want you to know that I am not acting with any thought of punishing you. I am doing only what I believe to be best."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Lambert looked curiously at his nephew's face, and saw that the contrition in it was sincere. He did not for a moment waver in his decision, but after a moment he held out his hand.

"I hope you do not harbor any hard feelings against me?"

Paul slowly and wonderingly took the proffered hand. His uncle's cold, immovable justice was something that he had never been able to understand. Not for a moment did he dream of asking for pardon, but he could not "harbor any hard feelings" against the austere old man, who judged everything according to an inflexible standard of right and wrong—who saw all conduct as either black or white, and to whom the crime of disobedience was equally unpardonable whether it affected the routine of a little household or the affairs of a nation.

CHAPTER XIV

AT THE CROSSROADS

ALONG the dusty road Paul trudged alone, his head bent. He did not look up until the little town lay behind him. There was very little feeling of exultation in his heart as he made his way along the shady road, under the apple trees whose fruit was already falling. He had just reached a bend in the road when he heard a voice calling him.

He stopped and looked around slowly. Janey was running toward him, her round little face puckered with distress.

"Janey!" He dropped his bundle in the dust, and held out both hands to her.

"What is it, Janey darling?"

"N-nothing," she sobbed, "I—oh *Paul* don't go!"

He patted her red head tenderly; for a moment or two he found it difficult to say anything.

"There, Janey—don't. I—and you'd better run on back, dear," he said at last.

"No, mother said I could come, and she said I was to give you another kiss for her and tell you that she loved you—and Granny's crying."

"Is she?" said Paul. "Oh, Janey—Well, come along kidlet."

"Do you think, Paul, it would have been different if your picture hadn't burned up?"

"Why, Janey?"

"If you had won a prize?"

"I don't think it would and, besides, it wasn't as good as that old thing I did of Aunt Gertrude. Do you remember? That thing on the top of the flour barrel?"

Jane stopped short, her face brightening, then, without saying anything, walked on again. Nothing more was said until they reached the crossroads. She dried her eyes on her apron, then standing on tiptoe, put both arms around his neck and kissed him on each cheek.

"Good-bye, Paul."

"Good-bye, Janey."

When he had disappeared under the shadows of the trees far down the road, Janey turned homeward and everything dropped from her thoughts except the one idea that had come to her a little while before.

Aunt Gertrude, in the Bakery setting the trays of cakes under the glass counters, was surprised and puzzled when her daughter ran into the shop in almost her usual state of high spirits.

Without stopping Jane ran through the shop and up the stairs to the little room that Paul had occupied since Carl's illness, and from a clutter of school exercises in the table drawer, she finally found what she was looking for—the newspaper clipping that she had cut out for Paul three months before with the address to which he was to have sent his picture

She was now in quest of the old picture he had painted on the top of the flour barrel! She remembered seeing Elise put it behind Mr. Lambert's desk one day when she was dusting the dining room and indeed there she found it—as fresh and new as ever when she had brushed off the dust with her apron.

Holding it face inward under her arm she started forth. Mr. Wheelock at the post office was one of her friends and she found him smoking his pipe and waiting for the noon mail. She presented her problem to him. He picked up the barrel top and looked at it in astonishment that gave way to admiration.

"It's fine," Mr. Wheelock said with finality, "and on the top of that old flour barrel too! Ain't that quaint? Well, now where do you want it sent?"

Jane sat down and copied the address for him.

"And you'll wrap it *carefully,* Mr. Wheelock?"

"Sure thing. And send it by express, too. Here, hadn't you better write your address on the back of this here pitcher—case it gets lost."

Jane took a post card and wrote on it boldly "Paul Winkler, Frederickstown, N. C." Then she looked at the picture intently. If only she knew just *how* good it was. It was, in fact, a piece of work that might have done credit to many a more experienced painter, and there were things in it that neither Jane nor Mr. Wheelock saw—vigor, and harmony and beauty, over and above the superficial likeness to Mrs. Lambert that Mr. Wheelock found so amazing.

Finally, satisfied though full of hope and fear, Jane went home.

CHAPTER XV

A FAMILY MATTER

PAUL'S departure left the old problem still unsolved. There was no help for it. If the family tradition was to be destroyed at last, it must be. The ancient name of Winkler would be erased from the glass window of the Bakeshop and a stranger's name put in its place.

As September progressed Jane felt utterly lost. Lily and Mr. Sheridan were too happy and satisfied to need her help and no word came from Paul or from the competition in which she had entered his picture.

One fine sunny day Aunt Gertrude decided upon a picnic. At noonday they set out in the old wagon —everyone, including Jane, in high spirits—and away they rumbled. Aunt Gertrude picked out a delightful spot near a little stream, and after they had eaten all they wanted of the delicious lunch, they all settled themselves for the afternoon, and Jane wandered off exploring.

Her curiosity was piqued immediately by an odd figure seated under an oak tree beneath a green umbrella—as if the oak tree did not come up to the mark in furnishing sufficient shade.

As she approached him her wonder grew. He wore a suit of black and white checks, an emerald green necktie of such vast proportions that the loops of the bow were visible even from Jane's inconvenient angle of sight. But most remarkable of all was his hat. It was large, made of straw and ornamented with a scarf of a rich and vivid green.

After a moment or two Jane made out what he was doing—he was painting a picture. She drew nearer until she was close enough to watch the airy strokes of his brushes. Then her curiosity got the better of her and she came closer. At once the artist caught sight of her and doffed his wonderful hat.

"How do you do? Am I disturbing you?"

"Not at all! *Not* at all!"

So Jane settled herself sociably on a hillock and watched the odd little man. She looked at him intently. He was a little man, of twenty-six or so, with a rosy face, pug nose, and bright blue eyes like pieces of Dutch china. His straw colored hair was combed down on his forehead and curled around his ears. He wore a tiny mustache, which was amusingly stiff and red as rust. Yet he was a pleasant looking young man; the simplicity and earnestness of his expression made one like him in spite of his absurdities.

"Ah, Nature! Nature! there is nothing like Nature, my dear young lady,—you may take my word for it." Said the little artist grandiloquently.

Just at that moment a series of shrill cries rent the air. Jane sprang up and the little artist raced along

at her heels. This is what had happened. While Mrs. Lambert and Elise were dozing over their books, a large black cow had come up and put her head over Elise's shoulder in a friendly way. Elise had screamed, and Mrs. Lambert had screamed. Elise had started to run and the cow, after a moment's thought, had followed her.

"One moment! Allow me!" cried a voice behind Jane. "Ladies, be calm!" and the dapper little figure hopped nimbly across the stepping stones of the stream and flew to Elise's rescue. He ran around in front of the cow shouting loudly and flourishing the green umbrella and making the strangest sounds in his throat. But, singular as his methods were, the stranger succeeded in getting the animal away from Elise and shooed it across a field.

Of course Elise blushed and smiled shyly when she thanked the artist for saving her life, and everyone was very grateful and begged him to stay and have some loganberry, which he was very glad to do. Mrs. Lambert asked him his name, and when he said "My name is Montgomery—P. Hyacinth Montgomery!" no one turned a hair. Mrs. Lambert told him her name and that of each member of the family and soon they were all as good friends as one could imagine. And they parted on the Goldsboro road with many invitations and plans for subsequent meetings.

From this time on the appearances of Mr. P. Hyacinth Montgomery at the Bakery became very frequent. One day, having noticed for the first time

the sign on the Bakeshop window, he inquired how there happened to be the name "Winkler" there when the family name was "Lambert." Mrs. Lambert, flattered, gave him a short history of the family, to which he listened thoughtfully, murmuring something about "Coincidence."

No member of the household was so blind as not to notice the preference that Mr. Montgomery showed for the society of Miss Elise, nor her tell-tale bashfulness when he grew brave enough to address her. Mr. Lambert, however, plainly disapproved and was inspired by the artist's presence to utter sarcasms that reduced the poor young man to the last stage of despair and caused Elise to weep bitterly in the solitude of her little bedroom.

This situation seemed hopelessly complicated to Jane. It had no points in common with the romance of Lily and Mr. Sheridan, and in this fact Elise found a certain melancholy satisfaction, and so matters stood one warm evening when chance brought about an interview between the young man and Mr. Lambert.

Mr. Montgomery drew himself up and breathed a deep breath. His knees were quaking; yet it was not without an air of real dignity that he prepared to brave the old lion.

Mr. Lambert was seated at his desk and there was a ferocious frown between his bristling grey eyebrows.

"Mr. Montgomery," he said, "I heard some of the remarks you were making to my daughter. I am

willing to listen to anything you have to say in explanation, provided you come to the point *quickly!*"

Poor Hyacinth gasped. "Yes, sir," he managed to articulate, and seemed unable to utter another sound.

"Well?" said Mr. Lambert. "Proceed."

Hyacinth squared his shoulders.

"Mr. Lambert—sir—I—er—I—"

"Do you wish to marry my daughter?"

"Yes, sir. Exactly."

"Then why don't you say so?"

"I *do* say so, sir."

"And you wish to ask my permission?"

"Yes, sir—just so. I *do* ask your permission."

"Well sir, it is *not* granted."

Hyacinth held his ground heroically. "Sir, I love your daughter," he said, "I think I have a right to ask you why you object to me as a son-in-law."

Mr. Lambert turned upon him slowly, eyed him from head to foot and then said,

"Yes. Quite so. Very well, then,—I object to your clothes to begin with."

"Sir," said Hyacinth, turning a deep pink, "they can be—changed."

"No doubt," said Mr. Lambert. "In the second place I object to your profession,—if you are pleased to call it such."

"That too can be changed." And he added, "I shall be quite willing to change it."

"Ah," said Mr. Lambert. "Well, my dear sir, lastly I don't like your name. Perhaps though" (*very* ironically) "you can change that!"

"One moment, please," urged Hyacinth, "I—I *can* change it. Sir, I confess that heretofore you have known me under a name that is not my own."

"And you mean to tell me that you have had the audacity to enjoy my hospitality under false pretences—to say nothing of paying court to my daughter—"

"Pray, sir—one moment!" implored Hyacinth, wringing his hands. "Don't misundestand me—"

"What *is* your name, sir?" shouted Mr. Lambert.

"My name, sir, is—Winkler. P. Hyacinth Winkler. The P. stands for Polybius . . ."

"Winkler!" gasped Mr. Lambert, *"Winkler!"*

"My sponsors, not I, are to be blamed—"

"Winkler!" Mr. Lambert was still repeating monotonously. "Will you be good enough to tell me what part of the world you are from?" he demanded when Hyacinth tried to speak again.

"I was born in the state of Missouri. My parents were people of consequence in a humble way . . ."

Before he had heard him half through, Mr. Lambert went to his desk and pulled out the family tree of the Winklers and began to trace twigs and branches. After asking a few excited questions of Hyacinth, he exclaimed, "Do you realize that you are the fourth or fifth cousin of my wife? That you are, in fact, the legal heir—or can be made so by her consent—to this famous establishment, that in fact if you will fit yourself to carry on this business, I will gladly withdraw my objections and accept you as a son-in-law."

Not waiting for an answer, Mr. Lambert, almost

apoplectic with excitement, went to call his wife.

"I have found a *Winkler*, my dear wife," he said, when she rushed into the room in bewilderment. "And this time, I believe," with a playful glance in the direction of Hyacinth and Elise standing by the window quite oblivious of everyone else, "A Winkler who will—stay put."

And thus, as Jane had once prophesied to Paul, the incredible had happened—the *Other Winkler* was found.

The wedding date was set for early winter—to this suggestion Mr. Lambert had given a ready consent, being anxious to have his son-in-law firmly attached to the household and his duties as soon as possible, and the domestic machinery moving once again with its accustomed smoothness. At the same time he was anxious to have his daughter's marriage do him credit, and during the weeks of trousseau making and festivity planning, his rules of law and order were freely and boldly disregarded.

Hyacinth had been exhibited to all the Lamberts' neighbors; he had been approved and congratulated. He had bought a calm, dark blue suit, and was growing a small beard to give some air of age and authority to his youthful face. Everyone was pleased. Letters of a most friendly and cousinly nature were exchanged with the family of the bridegroom who did not hestitate to express very frankly their surprise and delight in the young man's unlooked for good sense in choosing the bride he had, and allying himself with a solid and thriving business.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WANDERER COMES HOME

Hyacinth—Mr. Lambert called him Polybius—had been admitted to the secrets of the Bakery, and here his talents shone. He had already invented three new recipes, and so great was his enthusiasm that he actually sat up nights thinking out new mixtures, and he exhibited a genius for cake making that might in time rival that of old Johann himself.

But it was not without a slight shadow of resentment that Jane, although she was sincerely fond of her brother-in-law, saw him usurping the place that had been Paul's. Paul seemed entirely forgotten—as if he were no longer a member of the family at all, as if his life and theirs no longer had a connection. And to cap all, she had heard no news of the fate of the picture. She was bitterly disappointed because she had really been building all sorts of delightful imaginings on her unshakable belief that it *would* win a prize.

A few days before the wedding Mr. Lambert entered the dining room where Elise and Jane were picking up after a busy afternoon of sewing on the trousseau. There was a peculiar expression on his face—a mixture of annoyance, pleasure, and pride,

and he seemed to take no notice of the disorder of the room as he kissed his two daughters and asked them to give him a cup of tea.

"And Jane, call your mother. Where is Carl?"

"Well, well. I've got a piece of news—quite a piece of news, I must say," he announced when the required members of the family had been located and brought in. "Well, I must say, I am very much surprised," he continued, sipping his tea, "and not so much surprised either. I had an idea that there was something in the boy, and that was one reason I wanted to let him have his own rope for a while."

"Daddy!" cried Jane, springing up, "it is about *Paul?*"

"Why yes," said Mr. Lambert, smoothing his beard, "the boy, it seems won a third prize in that competition. I found the letter in the mail that was left at my office."

"Daddy!" shrieked Jane. "Oh, let me see! But Paul doesn't know anything about it. Oh, Daddy, where is he? Why he——"

"*I* don't see how it could be since his picture was burnt up," observed Carl.

"That's true!" exclaimed Mr. Lambert. "Do you imagine there is a mistake after all?" and his face fell slightly.

"No, no! There's no mistake!" cried Jane. "It wasn't the burnt picture—it was the other one—the one he did on top of the flour barrel. I know because I sent it off. After Paul had gone—and he doesn't know *anything!*"

"Well, well. The boy must learn of this somehow," said Mr. Lambert. "Gertrude, my dear, I think it would be quite proper to have a notice of this inserted in the *Frederickstown Star*. In fact, I dropped by on my way home this evening, and told Jim Braintree about it and he's putting it on the front page tomorrow. By Jove! Frederickstown will have reason to boast of this family for a good many years to come *I'm* thinking!" And the worthy old man swelled almost visibly with pride, as if in some way he was entirely responsible for the new honor that had been bestowed upon his house.

It was all very well to say that Paul must learn of his success, but where was he? He might be on the ocean or in New Zealand or Timbuctoo. This sad possibility somewhat dampened Jane's boundless blissful rapture; and yet she declared stoutly that she had a feeling in her bones that Paul was coming back.

CHAPTER XVII

PAUL IS HONORED

During the weeks which seemed so long to Elise and Hyacinth and so crowded to Aunt Gertrude, the old house underwent such a cleaning and scrubbing and furbishing as it had not known in five and twenty years. Floors were cleaned and oiled, brass and pewter polished, woodwork rubbed until it shone like satin, fresh curtains put up at the windows, carpets beaten and even doors and window frames given a coat of fresh new green paint.

And then the wedding cake! Aunt Gertrude herself made it—a mammoth delicacy, destined to be long remembered, composed of spices, raisins, citron and nuts, buried under a snowy frosting and artistic decorations designed by the versatile Hyacinth, who was allowed to contribute to this part of it only.

The Samuel Winklers came at last, and after they had presented their daughter-in-law with admiration and a multitude of gifts, there was a party in their honor at which Granny presided and Mr. Lambert proposed no less than eighteen toasts in blackberry wine.

At last the sixth of December, the wedding day, arrived. The first snow of the year had fallen and like

a Russian bride, Elise returned from the old church to the sound of sleighbells. And a beautiful bride she was too; and as for Hyacinth with his hair sleek and glossy and a flower in his buttonhole and with such an expression of importance and sedateness on his face—it was no wonder his family looked upon him with eyes actually moist with pride, and Elise thought him a matchless paragon among men.

A little after nine o'clock the musicians arrived, Tom Drinkwater with his fiddle, and Mr. Mellitz with his trombone in a huge green case, and Frank Fisher with his harp and Old Mr. Gilroy with his cello. They settled themselves in a corner, tuned up a bit and then the dancing began. Nobody knows to this day how all the guests who came managed to crowd themselves into the old house, but they did. Everyone was there, Mr. Timothy Sheridan, Lily, Mrs. Deacon, and the Websters in a solid phalanx. It was, in fact, quite the most gorgeous occasion that Frederickstown had seen in many a day.

As the joyous evening wore along to a close, Jane sat with her hands folded in her lap watching the orchestra fixedly. All around her people were dancing, eating, drinking, talking, laughing. She was not thinking about them. She was not even thinking about solemn Mr. Mellitz, nor of how Mr. Gilroy coaxed his deep, sweet tones out of the frayed strings of his old cello.

She was wondering where Paul was. The very gaiety of the family reunion made her feel the absence of the outcast all the more keenly. As she

sat there gazing aimlessly at the window over Mr. Mellitz' head, she suddenly caught her breath in a gasp. Through the window, it seemed to her that she had seen a face—though the next moment it had disappeared. Jane looked again uneasily at the window. There was nothing there but the reflection of the interior of the room—Anna taking plates off the table, silhouettes of the musicians' heads, her mother hurrying to see about something and then hurrying out again.

Then, all of a sudden, there it was again! Fantastically white, it seemed to Jane. She sprang up in fright, not thinking for a moment that it might be no more than the face of some inquisitive wayfarer, who had stolen into the garden. All at once hope, fear, doubt and joy broke over her.

"Paul!" The next moment she opened the door and stood upon the snowy step looking eagerly about in the shadows of the garden.

"Paul! Paul! Are you there?"

A figure moved out of the darkness, into the shaft of light that streamed through the open door.

"Janey," she heard the unmistakably familiar short laugh as she flung herself into his bear-like hug.

"Oh Paul, come in! Come in quickly!" she cried patting his shoulders and the wet, rough sleeves of his shabby coat in a perfect ecstasy of delight. But he drew back.

"No, no, Janey. I can't do that. But what's going on anyway?"

"Why Paul—don't you know? It's Elise—

Elise's wedding. And what do you think? There's another Winkler after all—Oh, you've got to come in Paul——"

"No, Janey—I can't," he repeated firmly. "I'll come back again some day, as I promised—but not now. I can't do it now. I only stopped to look in—I'm on my way down to Riverbury—there's a fellow down there who says he has some work for me if I want to come. I—I just stopped to peek in, thinking that perhaps I'd see you all sitting around the fire. A fine wedding guest I'd make."

Indeed he was shabby enough—and in his laugh was a tell-tale note of something like shame. It stung his pride not a little to have even Janey see the plain evidences of the rather unsuccessful struggle he had been waging with circumstances.

Just then Mr. Lambert pushed the half-open door wide.

"Jane! What are you doing? Come in at once—You've chilled the whole house!"

Everyone had turned and was staring in amazement, as Jane pulled Paul to the threshold under her father's very nose.

"What's this?" cried Mr. Lambert, seizing his nephew by the arm.

"It's me, Uncle," said Paul. "I am going. I—"

"Going!" cried Mr. Lambert. "Going! Not at all! Come in! Come in!"

The next thing that the bewildered Paul was conscious of was that he was standing inside the room, facing the table full of guests, with his uncle's arm

jovially embracing his shoulders, Jane clinging to his hand, and everyone exclaiming over the returned prodigal.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" Mr. Lambert began, "you are aware, I think, of the recent honor bestowed upon my nephew—an honor which is shared not only by his family, but by this community of which he is a part!" The remainder of the speech, no less than its resounding introduction was pure Greek to Paul, who stood with his long arms dangling, helplessly, gazing from face to face as if trying to piece out the solution of the mystery.

And then Paul, understanding nothing whatever, not at all sure he was not dreaming, but feeling as happy as he was puzzled, took his place beside his uncle to drink the health of the bride and long life to the name of Winkler. It was nice to be there, to see all the familiar faces, to hear the familiar voices—above all it was good to have his part in this celebration of family happiness, to feel that these were his kinfolk whose joys and sorrows must affect his life just as his affected theirs. But why was it that the glances he met shone with pride? What had *he* done? Why were they not ashamed of him as he stood there tattered and muddy, the very picture of the aimless, shiftless wanderer that his father had been before him? And so the evening passed in a sort of happy daze to Paul until the last guests had kissed the bride and taken their departure.

Paul and Jane stood side by side on the rice-strewn steps looking up the moonlit street.

"Come in, children," said Aunt Gertrude. When they had all gathered around her in the dining room in the midst of the gay disorder of the wedding-feast, Paul looked around him. Then turning to his uncle he said:

"Uncle Peter, you've been very kind to me. I had no intention to come in here tonight—I'm afraid I wasn't anything to be proud of at Elise's wedding—"

"Come, my boy, no more of that!" said Mr. Lambert briskly; then he came closer to Paul and looked keenly into the lean face.

"Why shouldn't you stay here when there's work enough in this town and a comfortable home for you? It's here that your people have lived these many years," he went on, "it's here that those who are proud of you live now—"

"*Proud* of me?" repeated Paul.

"But Daddy!" cried Jane suddenly, "Paul doesn't know!"

"Doesn't know what?"

"Let *me* tell him. Let me tell him! It's your picture, Paul—"

"What picture?" asked Paul, with a puzzled frown, looking down at her eager little face.

"It won, Paul! Don't you understand? It won! And we're all so proud of you—and it was in the papers only we didn't know where you were, and——"

"Begin at the beginning, darling. No one will interrupt your story," said Aunt Gertrude, drawing Jane to her. "And Paul's not going to run away."

So Janey took a deep breath and commenced afresh; while Paul listened, first growing pale, and then blushing a deep red. He felt the glow rushing all over him, and when she had finished, he could not say a word. They were all looking at him with eyes full of that warm pride that only a family can feel, and it seemed to him that his triumph had brought more happiness to them even than to himself.

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And now the doors and windows were locked, and the lights were put out, and the household was silent and slumbering. But the pale reflection of the moonlit snow glimmered through the window upon the scene of the late revelry, and a red glow still shone among the ashes of the fire, throwing a faint red light through the shadows that deepened over the painted face of Great Grandfather Johann. And that plump, ruddy old face wore a comfortable, benevolent, patriarchal look, as if that excellent old lover of law and order were saying, "And now I think everything is quite as it should be!"

THE END